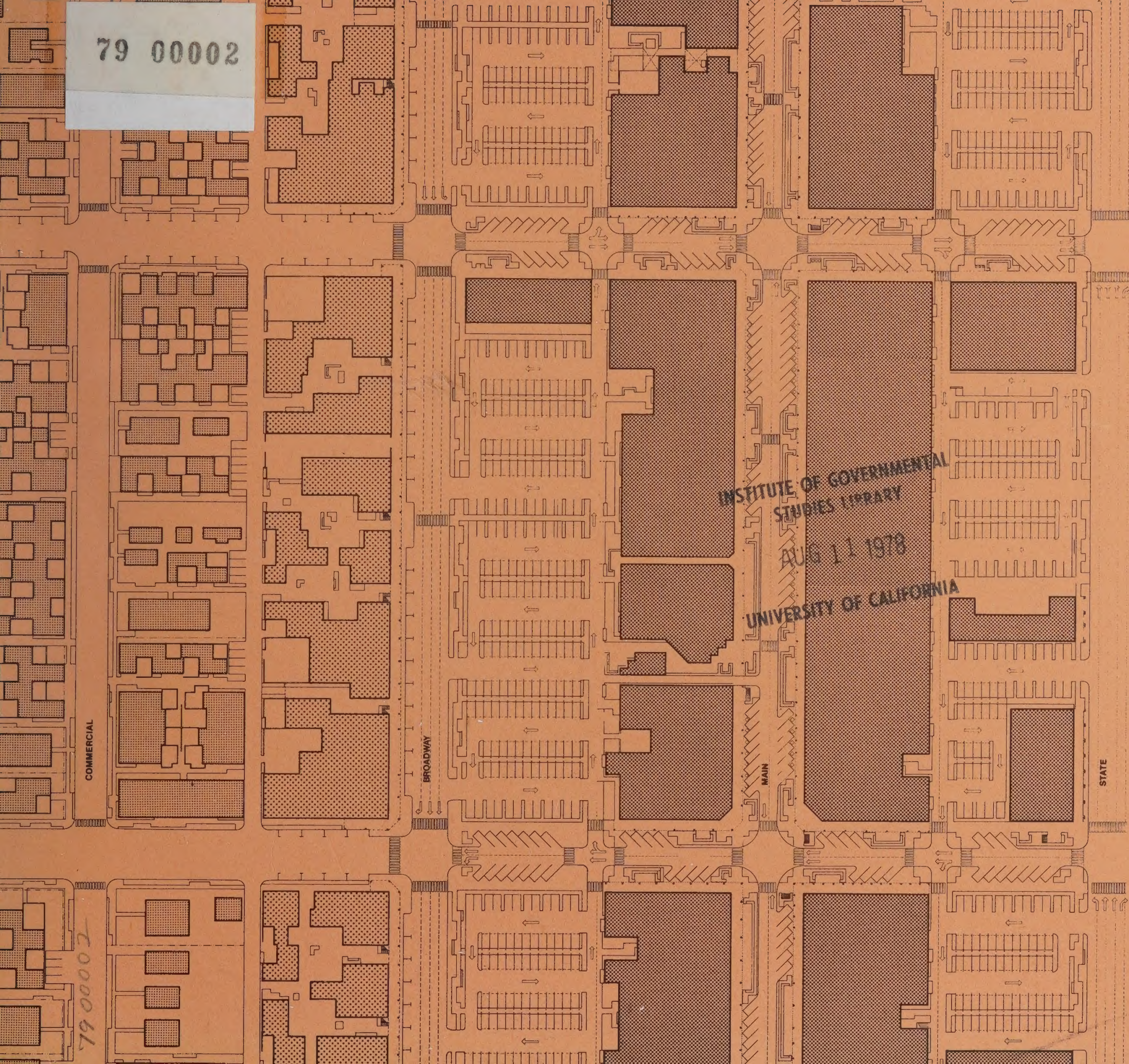


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URBAN DESIGN STUDY: DOWNTOWN EL CENTRO 1978



[Urban innovations group]
El Centro -- City planning
City planning -- California
Central business districts -- Planning -- California -- El Centro

DOWNTOWN

EL CENTRO

URBAN DESIGN STUDY

Urban Innovations Group

Project Manager: Helmut Schulitz

Principal Associate: Reuven Meghiddo

Project Staff: Manal Al-Shawaf
Ronald Johnson
I Hwa Chu
Nancy Lupo

This study is part of the General Plan
El Centro, California, 1978

Planning Consultants: Simon Eisner, A.I.P.
Frank Klett

We gratefully acknowledge the assistance and contributions of the following individuals and groups.

City of El Centro - 1978

Planning Commission

Doris Hoover, Chairperson
Norman Germani
Wilma Johnson
Howard E. Pritchett
Ed Snively
Wilbur Welsh
D.A. Twogood

City Council

Rollie Wisbrock, Mayor
Henry Alarcon
Iris De Zarn
Dale Gares
Roy Perry

City Administration

George Parker, City Manager

City Planning Department

Oliver Alvarado, Director
Alex Hines, Advanced Planner

Building Department

Bill Jones, Director

Department of Public Works

Darryl M. Avrit, Director
Angel Espiritu, City Engineer

Parks and Recreation Department

Walter Freese, Director

Fire Department

Tom Garner, Chief

Police Department

W. L. Gray, Jr., Chief

Chamber of Commerce

William Duflock, President

CONTENTS

1. OBJECTIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS
2. HISTORY
 - A. Historical Development
 - B. Forces and Trends
 - C. Summary
3. ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS
 - A. Location of downtown and type of center
 - B. Extent of core development
 - C. Potential for attracting business from outside
 - D. Potential for generating business from within downtown area
4. LANDUSE
 - A. Intensification of commercial landuse
 - B. Differentiation of commercial landuses
 - C. Intensification of housing development
5. CIRCULATION
 - A. Traffic inside downtown area
 - rerouting of traffic
 - parking facilities
 - pedestrian network
 - B. Traffic outside downtown - regional traffic
 - business loop
 - railroad
 - bus traffic
6. DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS - COMMERCIAL AREAS
 - A. Architectural continuity
 - B. Pedestrian Activities
 - C. Paving
 - D. Shaded areas
 - E. Entrance gates and collective advertising
 - F. Individual advertising
 - G. Organization of alleys
7. DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS - HOUSING REDEVELOPMENT AREAS
 - A. Special Zoning District
 - B. Building System
8. IMPLEMENTATION
 - A. The critical features
 - B. Land consolidation
 - C. Financing possibilities

1

OBJECTIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

OBJECTIVES

1

ESTABLISH DOWNTOWN AS REGIONAL COMMERCIAL CENTER BY PROVIDING SPECIAL IDENTITY OF COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS.

2

INTENSIFY ACTIVITIES, PREVENT SYMBOLS OF DETERIORATION (NAILED-UP STORES, VACANT LOTS, ETC.).

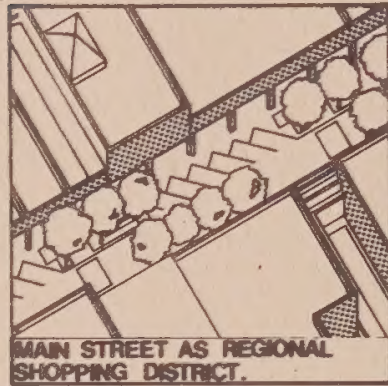
3

CREATE LEISURELY, PEDESTRIAN ORIENTED DOWNTOWN.

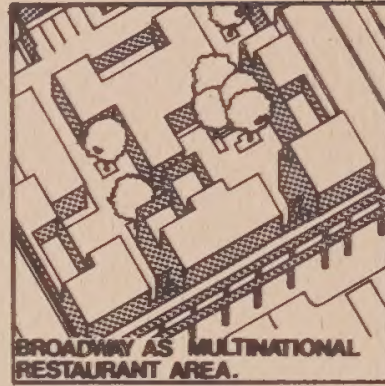
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CREATE MORE COMFORT FOR SHOPPERS AND SIGHTSEERS.

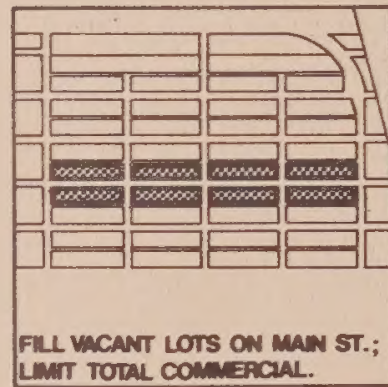
RECOMMENDATIONS



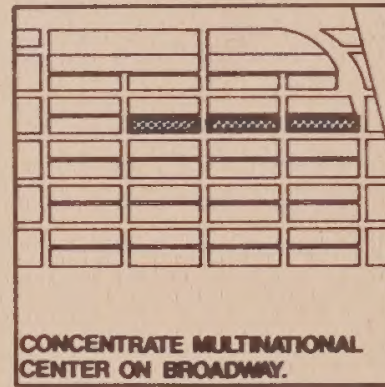
MAIN STREET AS REGIONAL SHOPPING DISTRICT.



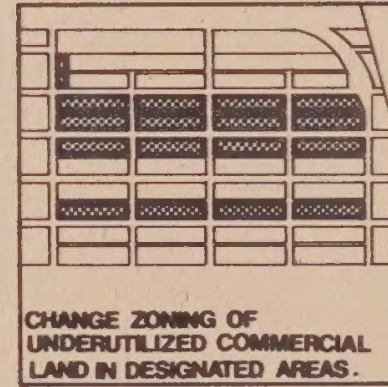
BROADWAY AS MULTINATIONAL RESTAURANT AREA.



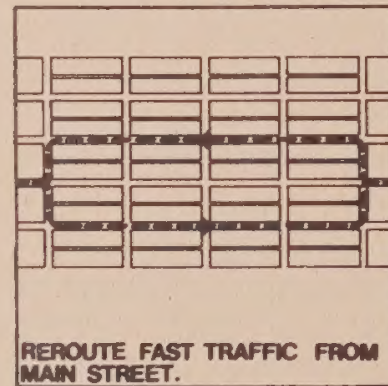
FILL VACANT LOTS ON MAIN ST.; LIMIT TOTAL COMMERCIAL.



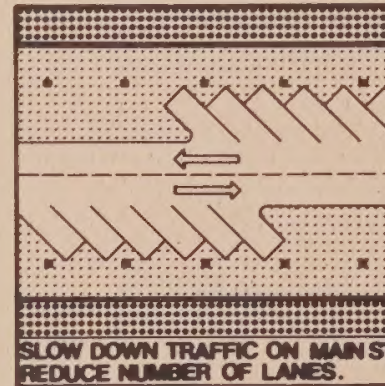
CONCENTRATE MULTINATIONAL CENTER ON BROADWAY.



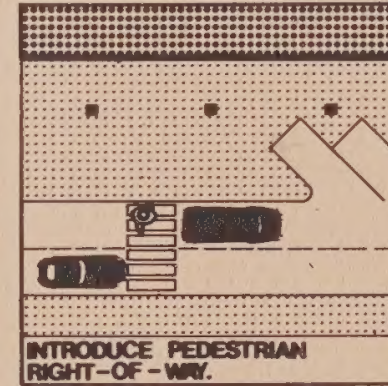
CHANGE ZONING OF UNDERUTILIZED COMMERCIAL LAND IN DESIGNATED AREAS.



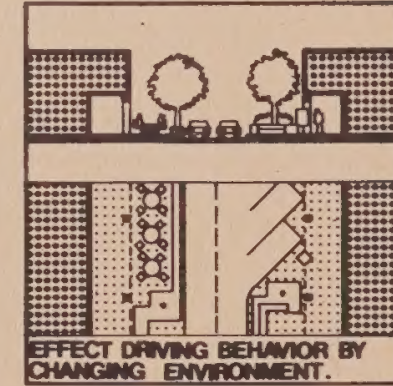
REROUTE FAST TRAFFIC FROM MAIN STREET.



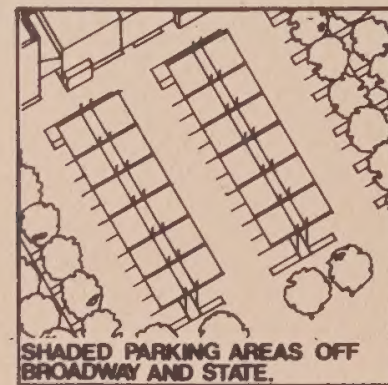
SLOW DOWN TRAFFIC ON MAIN ST. REDUCE NUMBER OF LANES.



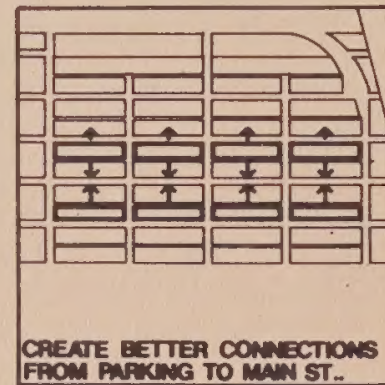
INTRODUCE PEDESTRIAN RIGHT-OF-WAY.



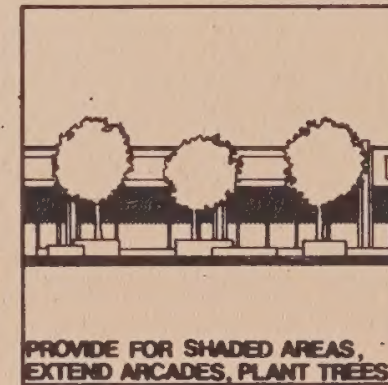
EFFECT DRIVING BEHAVIOR BY CHANGING ENVIRONMENT.



SHADED PARKING AREAS OFF BROADWAY AND STATE.



CREATE BETTER CONNECTIONS FROM PARKING TO MAIN ST.



PROVIDE FOR SHADED AREAS, EXTEND ARCADES, PLANT TREES.



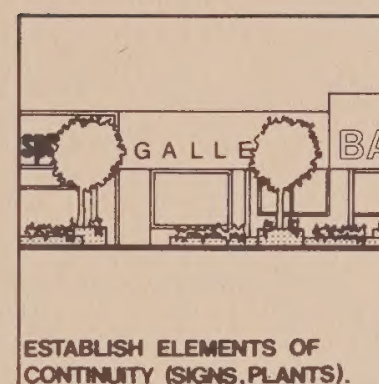
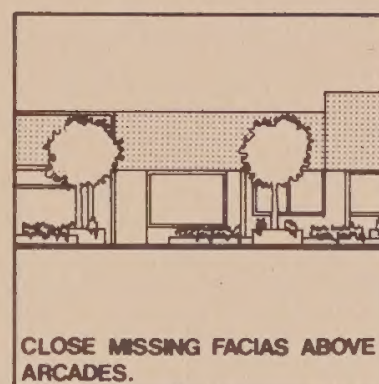
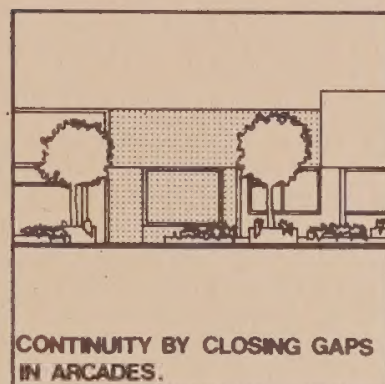
EXTEND PEDESTRIAN AREAS INTO STREET FOR OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES.

OBJECTIVES

RECOMMENDATIONS

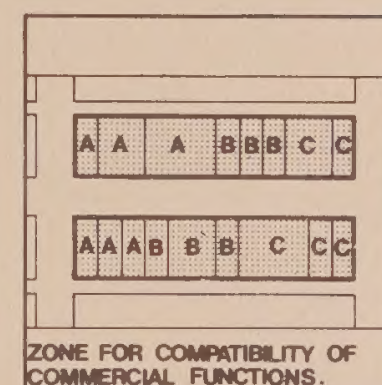
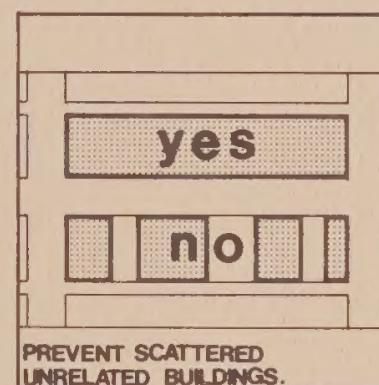
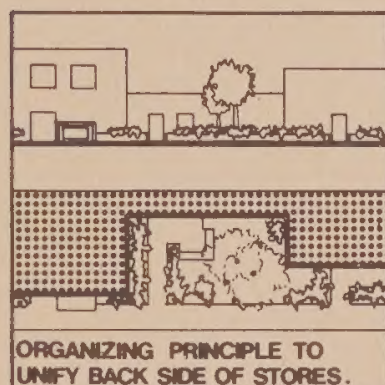
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EXPLOIT UNIQUENESS OF MAIN STREET AND BROADWAY AS AN ARCHITECTURAL ATTRACTION.



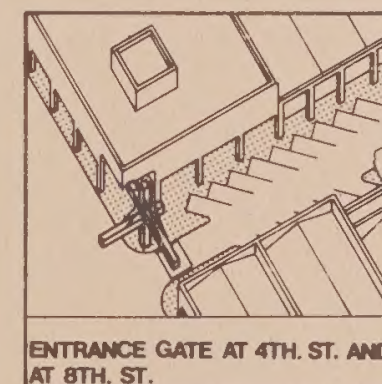
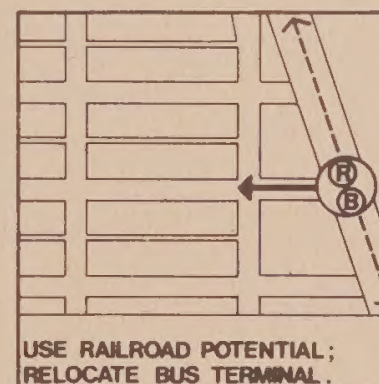
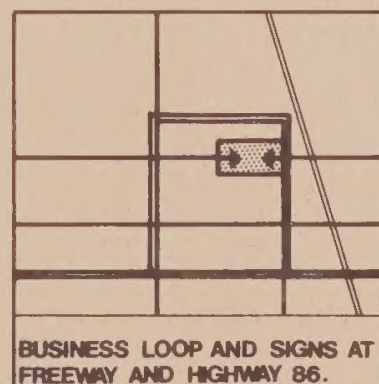
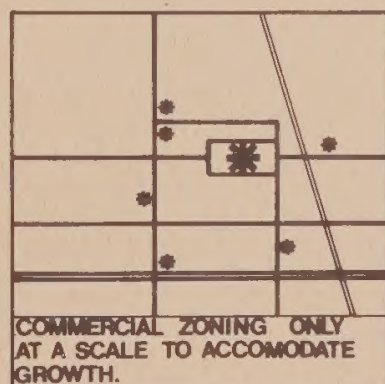
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IMPROVE VISUAL QUALITIES OF DOWNTOWN AREA.



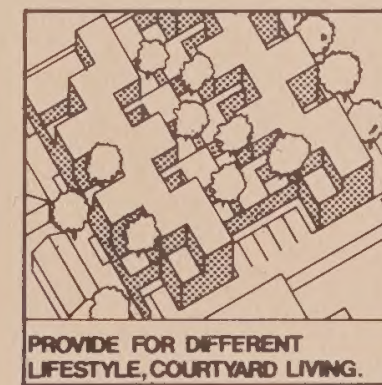
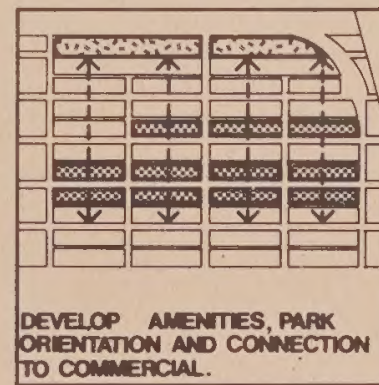
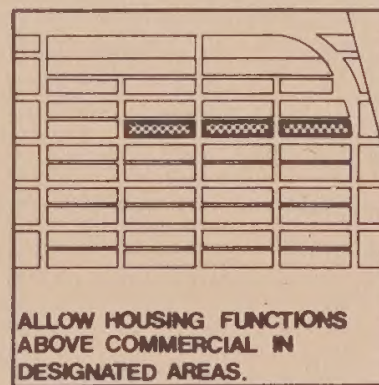
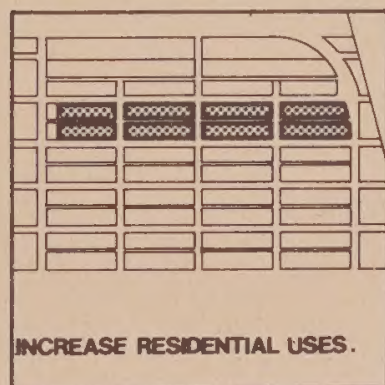
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ATTRACT BUSINESS FROM OUTSIDE THE DOWNTOWN AREA.

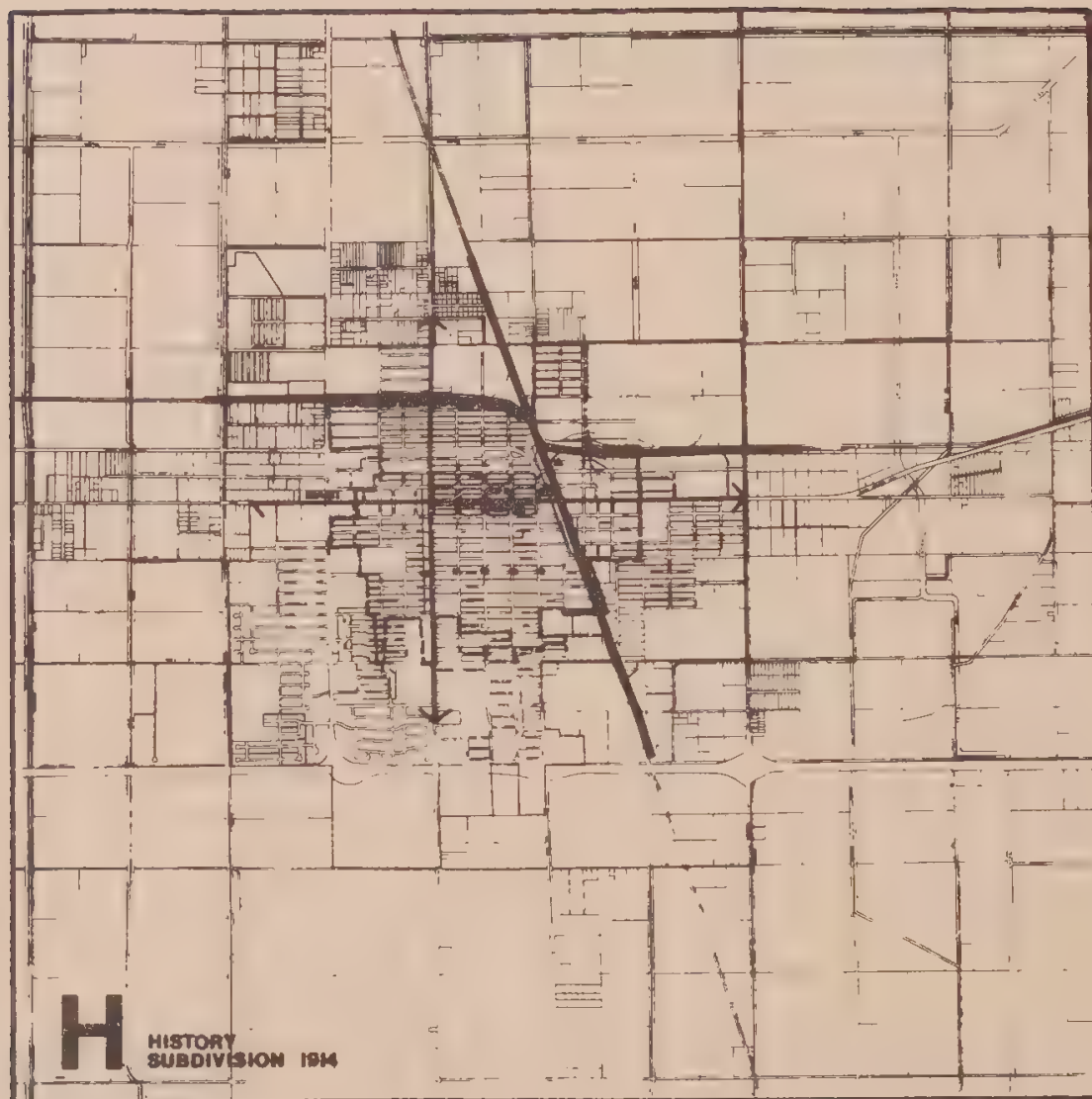


8

SUPPORT DOWNTOWN BUSINESS BY INCREASING DOWNTOWN RESIDENTS.



2 HISTORY



A. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

A project of this kind requires knowledge of the forces that have contributed to the evolution of the city. Such knowledge helps identify (1) those patterns and trends that cannot be altered, (2) those elements of historical or significant value that should be preserved or maximized and (3) those aspects of the city that are definitely subject to change.

Early maps of the city of El Centro reveal that contrary to today, the downtown area was located at the center of the urbanized area.

Originally the railroad station was the main entry point to the city. Downtown was immediately adjacent to the station so the business district was the first thing a visitor would see when arriving in El Centro. Main Street was the most important east-west artery for auto travel and all traffic from San Diego to Holtville and Yuma passed through the downtown zone. North-south traffic between Imperial and Calexico also flowed through the downtown zone via 4th and 8th Street.

Being in competition with other cities in the Imperial Valley, El Centro promoted the sale of real estate, not by promises, but by actually building service facilities. El Centro, therefore, was able to boast of a large hotel, a theater, and several banks. These first public buildings were located along Main Street and Broadway.

In short, at the early stage of urban development the downtown area was a flourishing commercial area with a solid future ahead. The urban design theme for Main Street, State Street and Broadway with its continuity of arcades, seemed to be leading toward a unified collective urban design full of pedestrian life.

B. FORCES AND TRENDS

CIRCULATION

With the decrease in railroad passenger travel starting in the second quarter of this century, the railroad became less and less important as an entrance to the city. However, the railroad became more important as a cargo connection for industry located on the east side of the railroad tracks.

In spite of the decrease in importance of the railroad station as an entry point, downtown still remained an important stopover for the west-east and north-south auto traffic which flowed through the area. Hotels in the downtown area, and motels along Adams, are reminders of the importance of the downtown area as an overnight stopover for through traffic.

The new east-west freeway (I-8) connecting San Diego and Yuma (Arizona), however, changed things. The freeway decreased travel time and reduced the importance of El Centro as a "stopover" for through travelers and since the freeway bypasses the downtown area, it removes the business district from the view of many travelers.

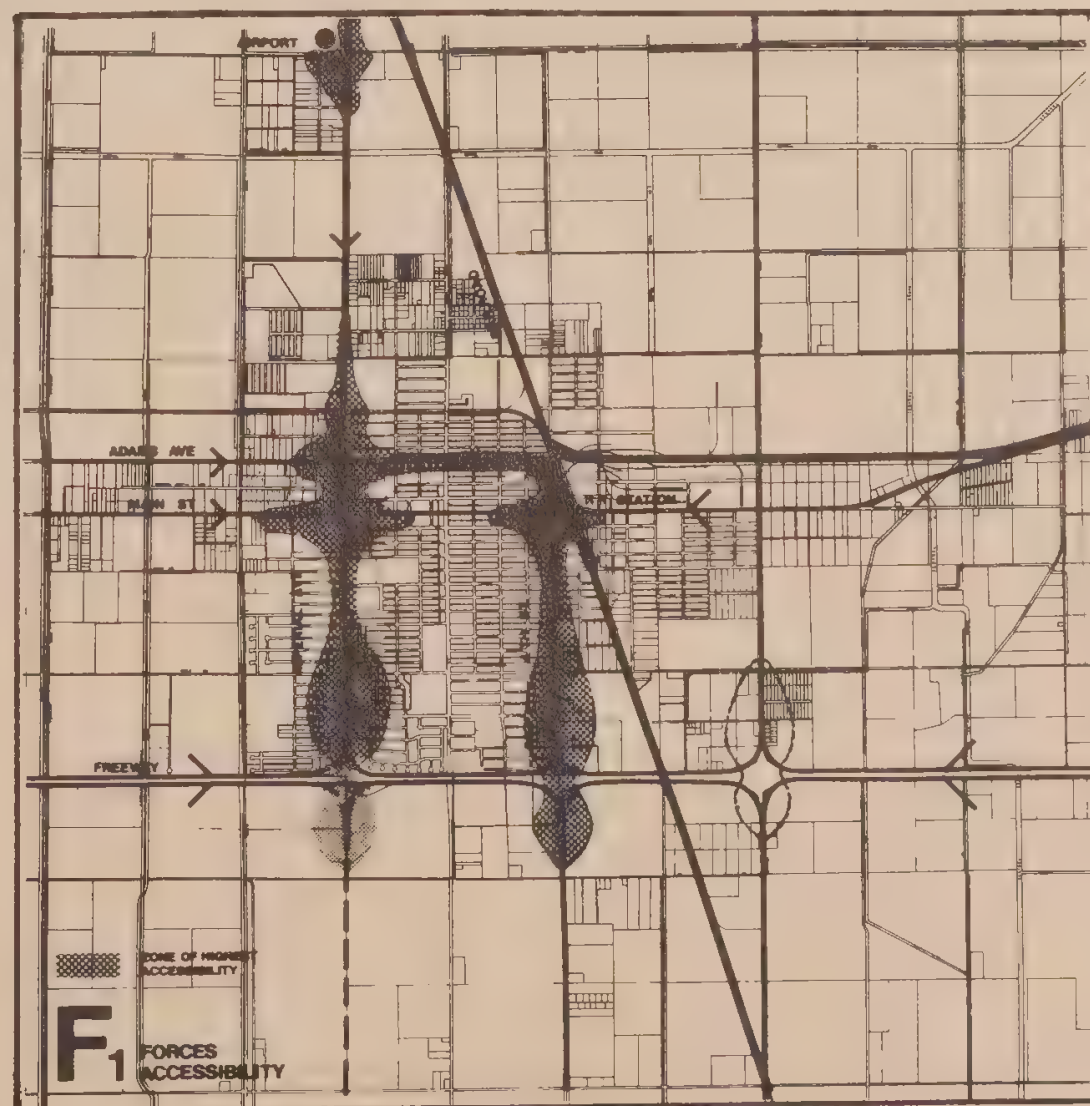
Roadside business locations tend to adjust to changes in the traffic patterns, and new hotels and other commercial enterprise have started to develop around the off-ramps of the freeway.

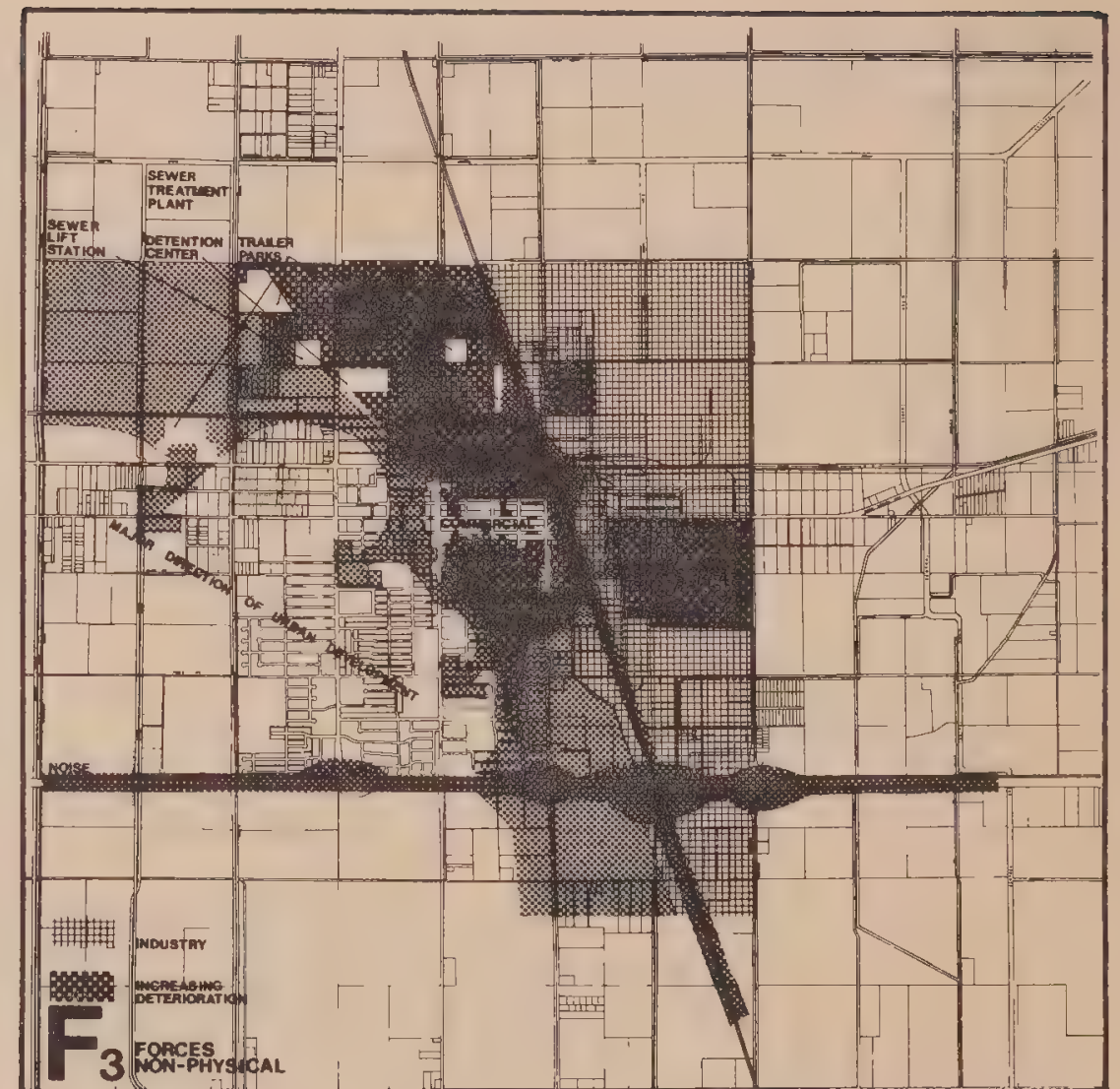
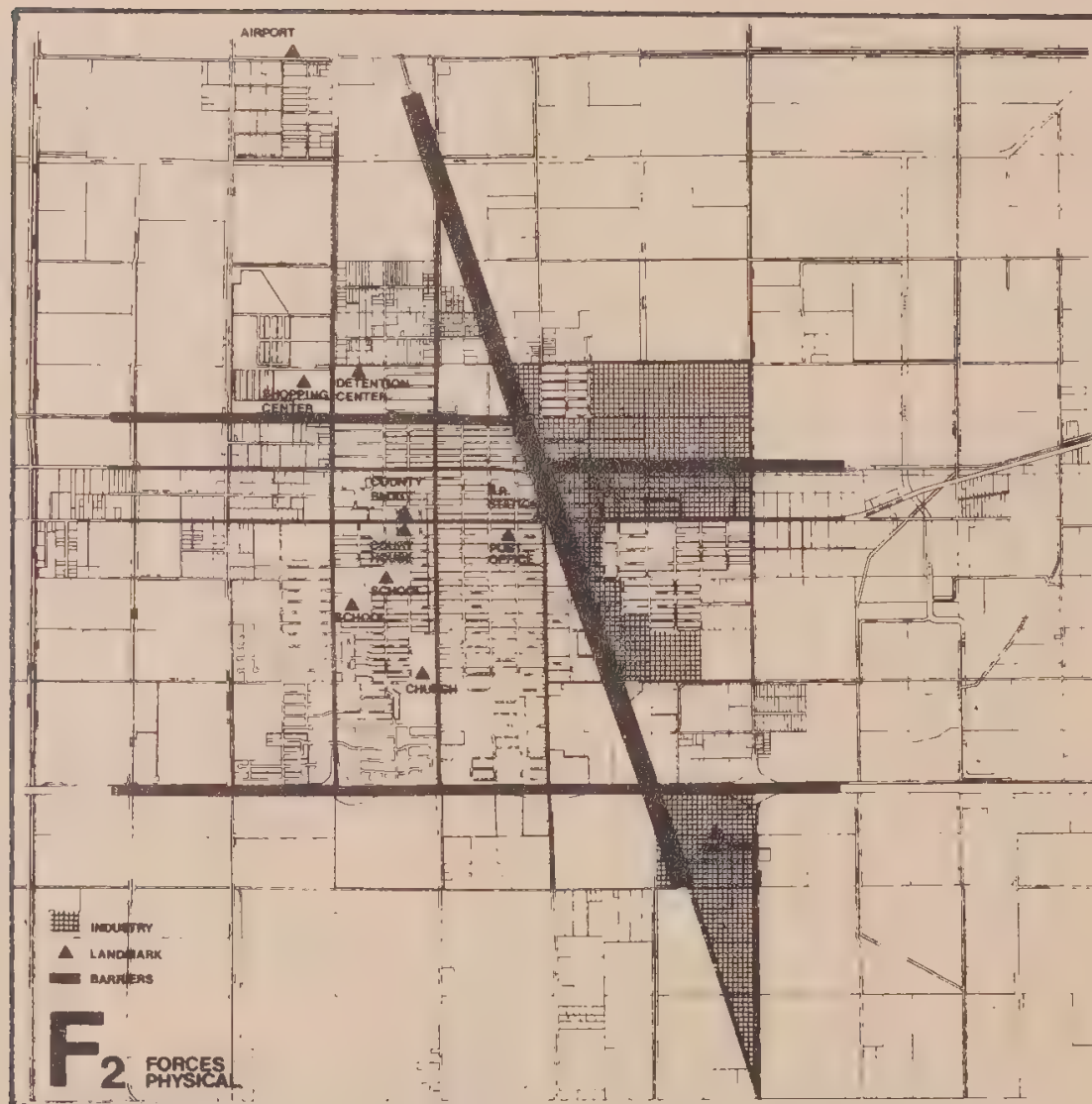
The major regional entry points to the city today are the freeway off-ramps at 4th and Imperial (Highway 86) for traffic from the east-west and south, and Imperial Highway for traffic from the north. Clearly, Imperial is an important axis, though its importance is somewhat reduced because the freeway off-ramp is not a full interchange.

With increasing commuting by air, the location of the Airport is of increasing importance as an entry point to the city. Both alternative locations, the current Imperial Airport and the potential development of the Naval Air Base, west of El Centro, are unrelated to the downtown area.

None of the above mentioned entry points tend currently to strengthen the existing downtown business district.

As shopping center locations tend to follow points of increased accessibility it seems likely that the above mentioned entry areas will be under pressure for further commercial zoning.





PHYSICAL BARRIERS

The existing railroad lines form barriers to further urban development as much as the new freeway does due to the limited number of crossings and the nature of the operations. The north-south railroad constitutes a barrier that is further reinforced by the adjacent industrial area.

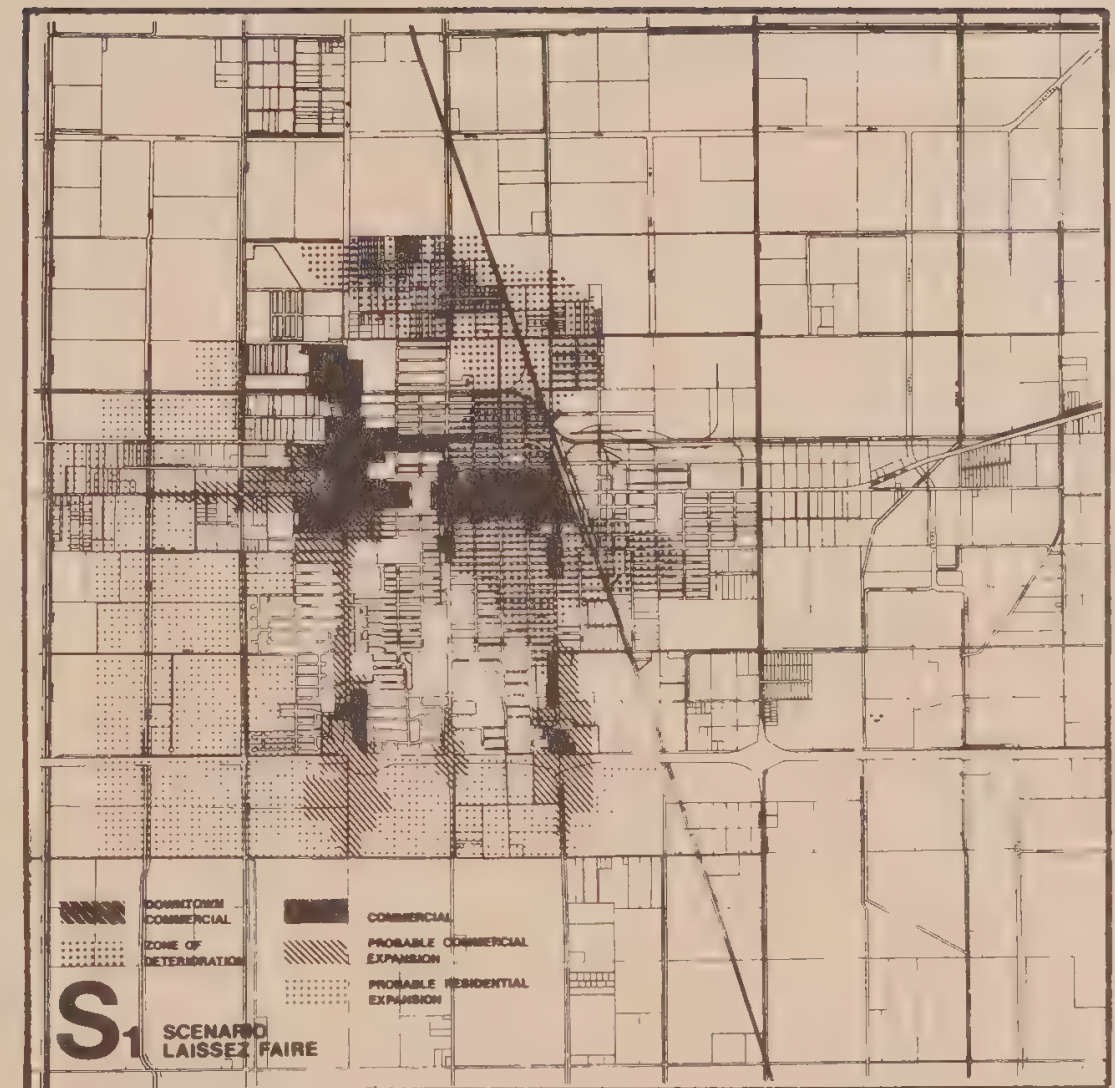
NONPHYSICAL FORCES

The railroad barriers described above imply also a noise zone and psychological barrier zone which makes the adjacent areas less desirable for urban residential development. It should not come as a surprise that lower quality residential areas, mobile home parks, the detention center, sewage treatment plant, and other less desirable uses have clustered in close proximity to this barrier zone.

As a result, better quality residential development has taken place toward the southwest. With the rapid growth of El Centro toward the southwest new shopping facilities have developed in a more convenient location to the new residential areas, along the major accessibility axis of Imperial Highway. These new shopping centers create intense competition for the downtown business district, which the downtown area has survived only because of the greater concentration and diversification of shopping facilities located there.

C. SUMMARY

Commercial facilities have been built which by far exceed the demands of the growing city. This has resulted in a migration of business away from the downtown area towards the west, leaving vacant property behind. This overbuilding has led to unsatisfactory situations for both the downtown district and for the new shopping areas (especially in the Northern Shopping Center on Imperial).



City planning and growth management should seek a balanced growth. It can be predicted that without proper growth management, new speculative developments will come into existence around the above mentioned entry points to the city, particularly around the new freeway access points. New commercial zoning should only be designated to accommodate natural urban growth. Speculative urban development is only advantageous to the city as long as it fosters growth; it is detrimental if it fosters migration, creating new developments at the cost of urban blight in the abandoned areas.

3 ECONOMICS

A. LOCATION OF DOWNTOWN AND TYPE OF CENTER

As mentioned previously, the downtown business district is no longer located at the population center of the city, nor does it have an advantageous location with regard to traffic access. It lies adjacent to a large industrial area to the east which is completely ineffective as a generator of downtown business. The clusters of residential areas within the industrial area are also not as important as they might be for the downtown shopping area because of the low buying power of their residents. Residential areas adjacent to the downtown on the north and south are also in the lower income category and are limited in their support of downtown business.

Thus, the location of the downtown area makes it able to flourish only as a regional center rather than as a community center as well.

The downtown zone is able to compensate for its less advantageous location because of its size, concentration, and the diversification of stores still unparalleled in any of the newer shopping centers. Above all, the downtown area has the potential to be a unified shopping street with all the necessary amenities for pedestrian shoppers, such as shaded arcades, a visually pleasant environment, and free parking in close proximity. This as a total package is unavailable elsewhere in the area.

The development of the downtown commercial zone must be pursued as a powerful regional shopping center. To this end it is important that:

1. Further migration of business be arrested. Speculative commercial developments in other parts of the city should be permitted only if compatible with the overall goals of the General Plan.

2. An aggressive development program must be mounted to attract new enterprises.
3. The highest priority for the future should be placed on either the expansion of existing facilities for the sale of general merchandise or the attraction of an additional department store and specialty uses.

B. EXTENT OF CORE DEVELOPMENT

The downtown area has an immense growth potential. A large part of the land area is underutilized or vacant. In view of the competing vacant areas zoned for commercial use in other parts of the city it is unlikely that the total commercially zoned land will be occupied.

The following steps are therefore recommended:

1. The current random growth of the downtown commercial areas should be solidified and structured.
2. Growth should be concentrated on both sides of Main Street as well as north of Broadway and south of State Street.
3. Immediate attention should be given to filling vacant store space and developing parking or vacant lots on Main Street in order to achieve an uninterrupted sequence of commercial facilities linked by arcades.
4. A number of adjacent vacant lots could be made available on Main Street by moving a few parking lots (see under Circulation). These vacant lots could help attract new larger shopping facilities such as a department store.

C. ATTRACT BUSINESS FROM OUTSIDE

It is of little importance for a regional commercial center to coincide with the geographical or population center of a city. What matters is visibility and accessibility to through-traffic. In both these respects, downtown seems to be at a disadvantage when compared to other areas currently zoned for commercial use.

The following measures are therefore suggested:

1. The location of the downtown area should be clearly indicated at all major entry points to the city, particularly at the freeway exits. This will help guide travelers who are unfamiliar with El Centro.
2. A freeway loop bringing visitors from the freeway to the downtown area and back should be established.
3. Since Main Street runs perpendicular to the freeway loop and can only be perceived while passing the intersection of 4th and Main before turning into Adams Blvd., it is suggested that a gateway be established at 4th Street to draw more attention to Main Street. This gateway could take the form of street banners or a sculptural structure which advertises the activities in the downtown area.
4. The revival of historical train rides, as a major tourist attraction, could bring visitors from Mexicali, Calexico and Brawley to El Centro.

The location of the railroad station, as an appropriate entry point to El Centro, could be reinforced by relocating the Greyhound station immediately adjacent to it.

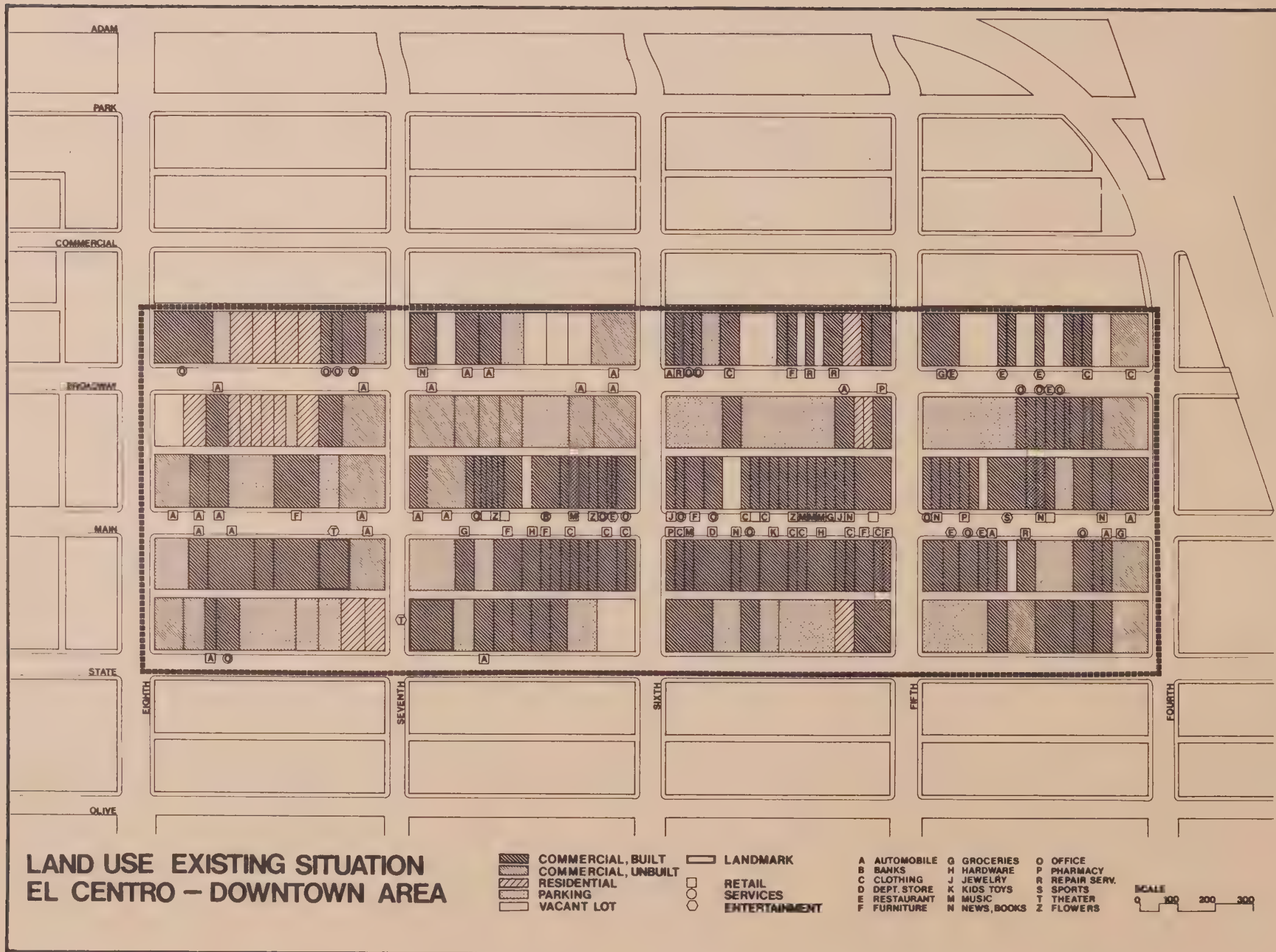
D. POTENTIAL TO GENERATE BUSINESS FROM WITHIN DOWNTOWN AREA

In order to generate more business for the downtown store owners, adjacent residential uses should be provided for at higher densities. In addition to increasing the quality of the housing development to the east and north of the downtown area, serious and immediate attention should be given to rebuilding the residential areas immediately adjacent to and surrounding the downtown.

The downtown business district is currently surrounded by older, lower quality housing and in terms of permitted density the areas are under-utilized. Although the adjacent residential areas are zoned for R3, many lots are still utilized at R1 and R2 densities.

Better and higher land utilization in the residential zones would generate more potential shoppers and would help to overcome a state of decline in the downtown area. It would overcome the present physical isolation of the shopping zone from the rest of the city.

4 LAND USE



LANDUSE

Landuse in the downtown area appears, at first glance, to be somewhat uncoordinated and disorderly. Only after closer study does one detect a certain order.

The following observations can be made:

1. State, Main and Broadway are zoned for commercial use within the four-block study area from 4th to 8th Street. The south side of Commercial Avenue is zoned "RP" (residential with professional offices and services).
2. In view of the total potential for development the area fully utilized for commerce is comparatively small.
3. Most vacant lots are used for parking or car sales. Land prices do not warrant the construction of multistory parking structures. Parking lots interrupt the continuity of a commercial center when placed in between stores. Vacant lots or large parking lots tend to split a linear center into isolated mini-centers.
4. Parking lots are concentrated south of Broadway and north of State Street.
5. Commercial activities tend to cluster according to functions. The west side of Main Street (7th - 8th St.) exhibits a concentration of automotive sales, the middle section (5th to 7th), general merchandise, and Broadway from 5th to 4th, international restaurants.

Future landuse development should reinforce existing patterns and trends which could provide a sound structure and a logical organization of the downtown district:

A. INTENSIFICATION OF LANDUSE

The total available commercially zoned land in downtown far exceeds the actual demand. At the same time, it seems that the current parking areas will be insufficient should more business be attracted to downtown.

The concentration and limitation of retail commercial land uses to both sides of Main Street, to the south side of State, and the north side of Broadway is recommended.

At the same time, it is proposed that the south side of Broadway and the north side of State Street be converted into a parking district. The establishment of these areas for parking reinforces a trend that has occurred naturally during the last few years.

It is further recommended that the zoning of the land in the "PR" zone on Commercial Avenue be changed back to R3. Professional offices should instead be accommodated on Broadway with the commercial zone.

In the distant future, should the areas zoned for commercial activity be insufficient to meet the demand it can be assumed that land prices will have increased to a point where it would warrant the development of multi-level parking. This would make possible commercial expansion.

B. DIFFERENTIATION AMONG COMMERCIAL LAND USES

It is important that a commercial center cluster related commercial activities in order to maximize shopper choice. Such clustering makes it possible to develop a unique character for each cluster zone. The emphasis on a unique character is particularly important in the off-Main Street commercial zones.

Main Street should be developed as a typical shopping street with a sequence of clusters of related stores.

The character of Broadway as an international entertainment, restaurant and tourist center should be strengthened. Whereas the stores on Main Street are street-oriented, new Broadway restaurants and shops should pursue a more introverted, courtyard-oriented atmosphere (as described under Design Considerations).

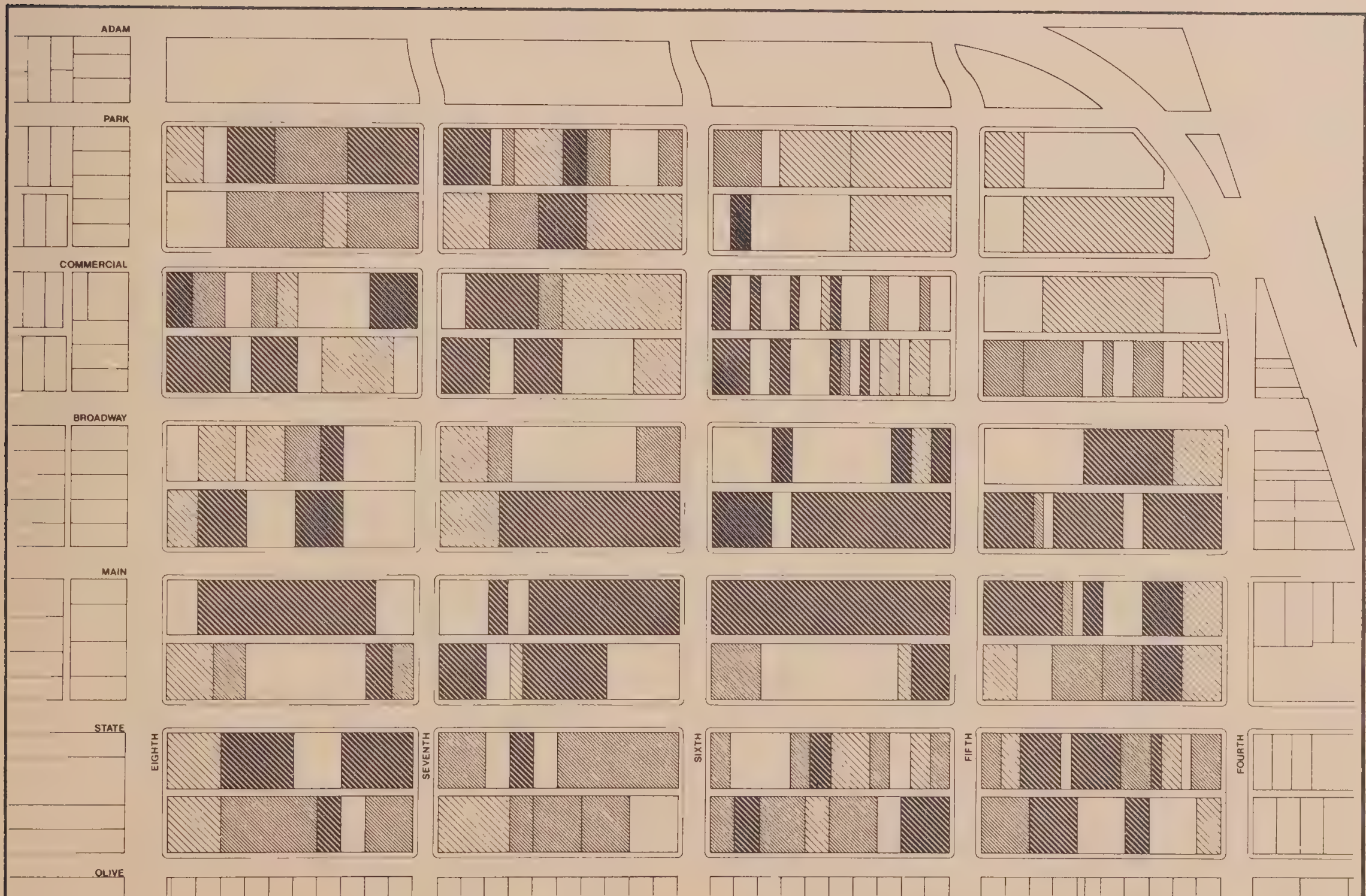
C. INTENSIFICATION OF HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

An important factor in trying to make an urban space more pleasant is the presence of people. In older European cities the coexistence of residential and commercial activities create a viable urban atmosphere which is lacking in our current typically isolated shopping centers and office ghettos.

Although a mix of shopping and residential functions is not recommended for Main Street, it is imperative for the life and activities of the downtown area that the amount of housing in immediate proximity to the commercial facilities be increased, and direct pedestrian links be established between the two areas.

Unfortunately, residential areas in close proximity to the downtown zone have historically not fared well in American cities. For single-family living, conditions tend to be preferable in the suburbs.

Typical "R3" developments have fared better tax-wise, but have seldom provided for acceptable living conditions due to higher densities and a lack of outdoor spaces. Outdoor spaces are usually consumed by unusable setbacks and side yards. Attempts to develop inner city housing have often been a losing proposition and have

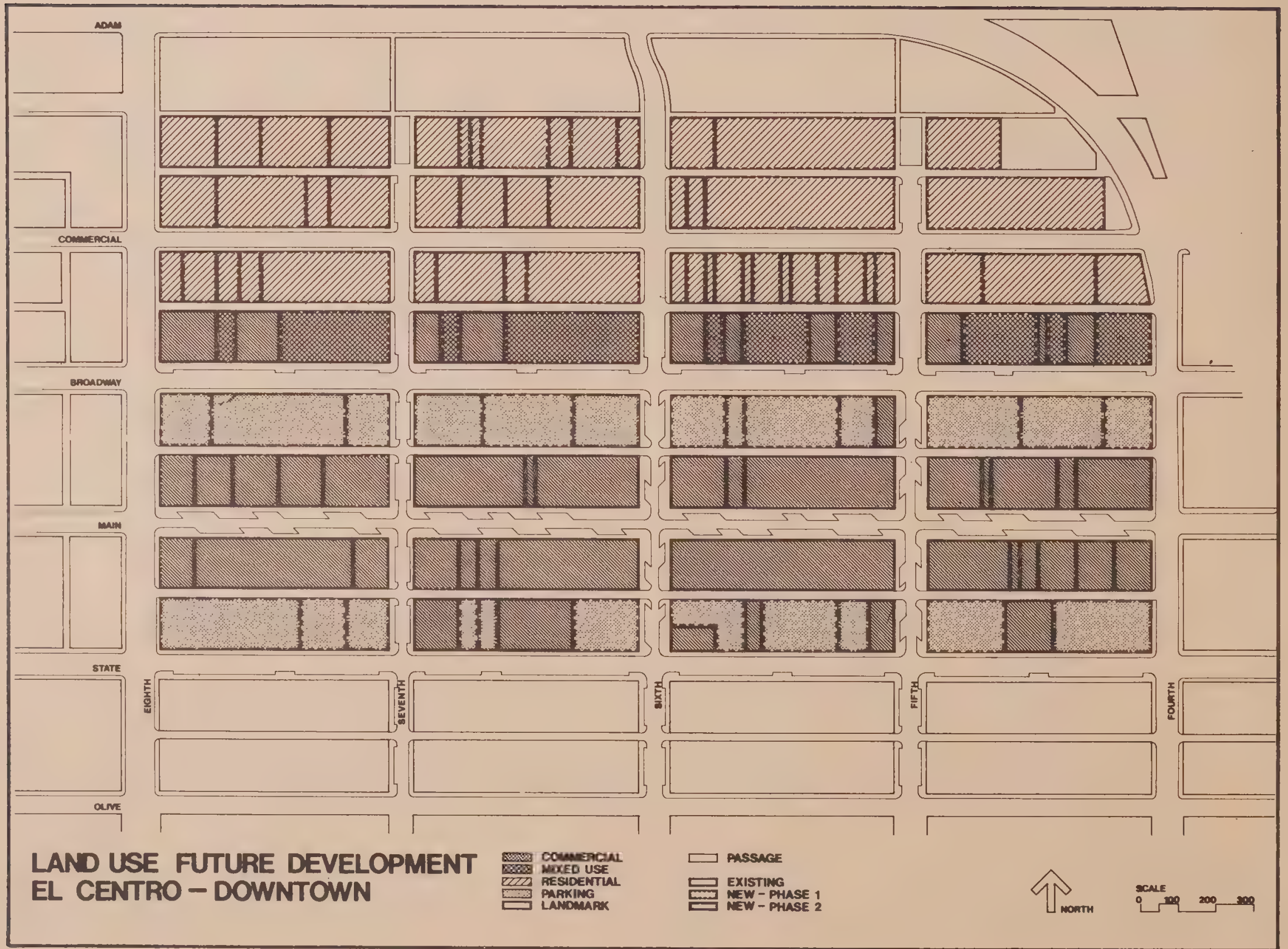


INTENSITY OF LAND UTILIZATION EL CENTRO—DOWNTOWN

■ UTILIZED
 ■ UNDER-UTILIZED
 ■ SEVERELY UNDER-UTILIZED
 □ VACANT



SCALE
 0 100 200 300

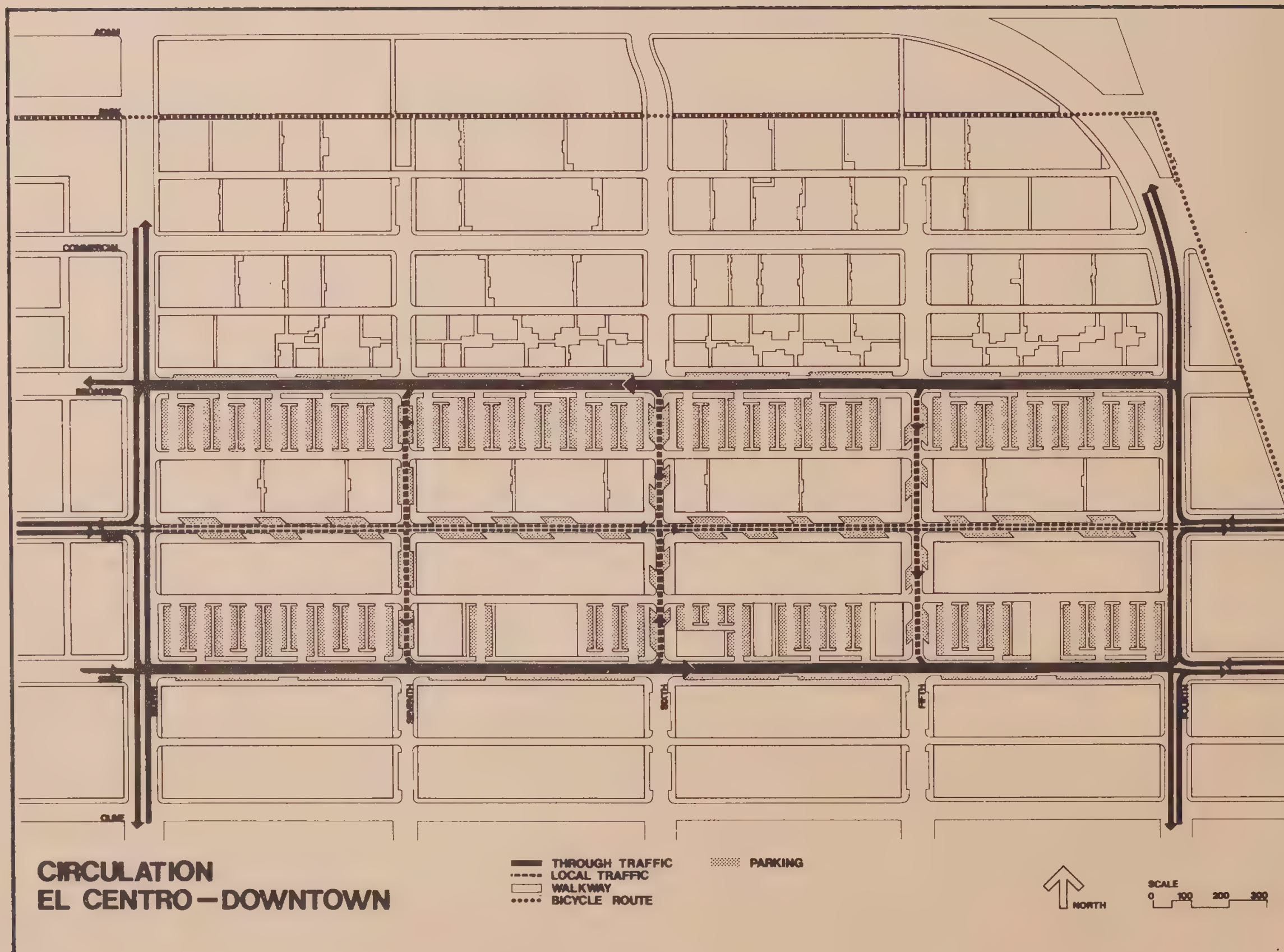


generally been dependent on governmental subsidies. This, in turn, led to equating inner city housing with poverty. Yet a new, attractive residential community is important for the downtown district. In order to attract new housing development, new incentives must be given in the zoning requirements.

A special zoning district should be established for Park and Commercial Ave. A main feature of this zone could be a unique use of open space. Instead of side yards and setbacks, these areas could be privately used for courtyards and terraces. This zoning regulation will provide a different type of housing that could constitute a viable alternative to both typical R3 housing and mobile home living. (For a more detailed explanation see Design Considerations.)

For the transition zone between commercial and residential uses along Broadway, a mixed commercial-residential zone is recommended. Commercial activities will occupy the ground level while housing will be restricted to the upper levels. Professional offices could also be located on either level.

5 CIRCULATION



A. TRAFFIC INSIDE DOWNTOWN AREA

REROUTING OF TRAFFIC

Main Street is the heavily traveled east-west street in the downtown area. Most of the traffic, however, is through-traffic. Usually, cars move at high speeds, particularly in the early morning and night hours. Rather than being supportive of the downtown shopping area, the traffic seems to be detrimental.

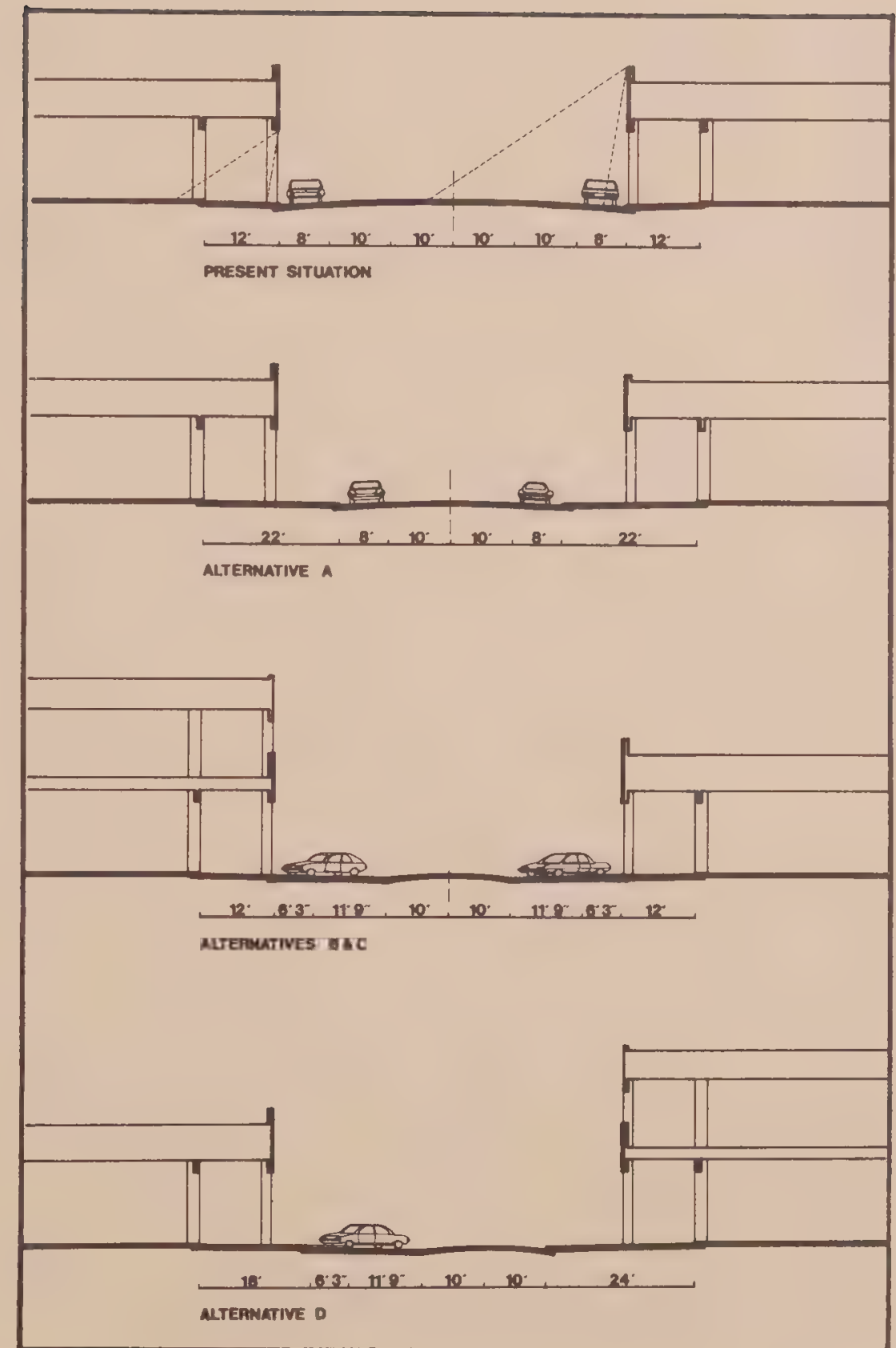
To insure the success of Main Street as a shopping area it is vital that it be converted to a street that is more leisurely and pedestrian-oriented.

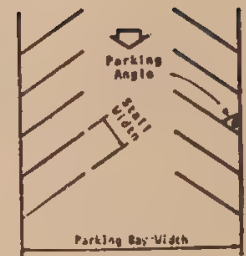
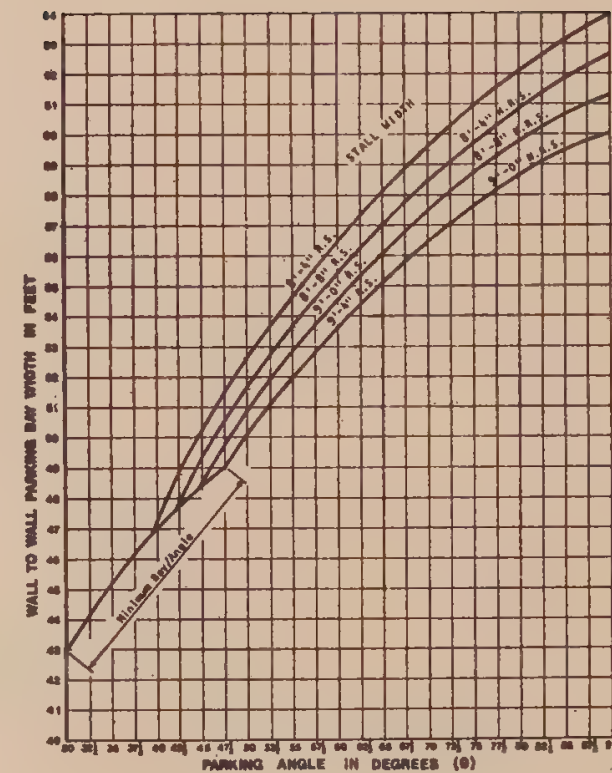
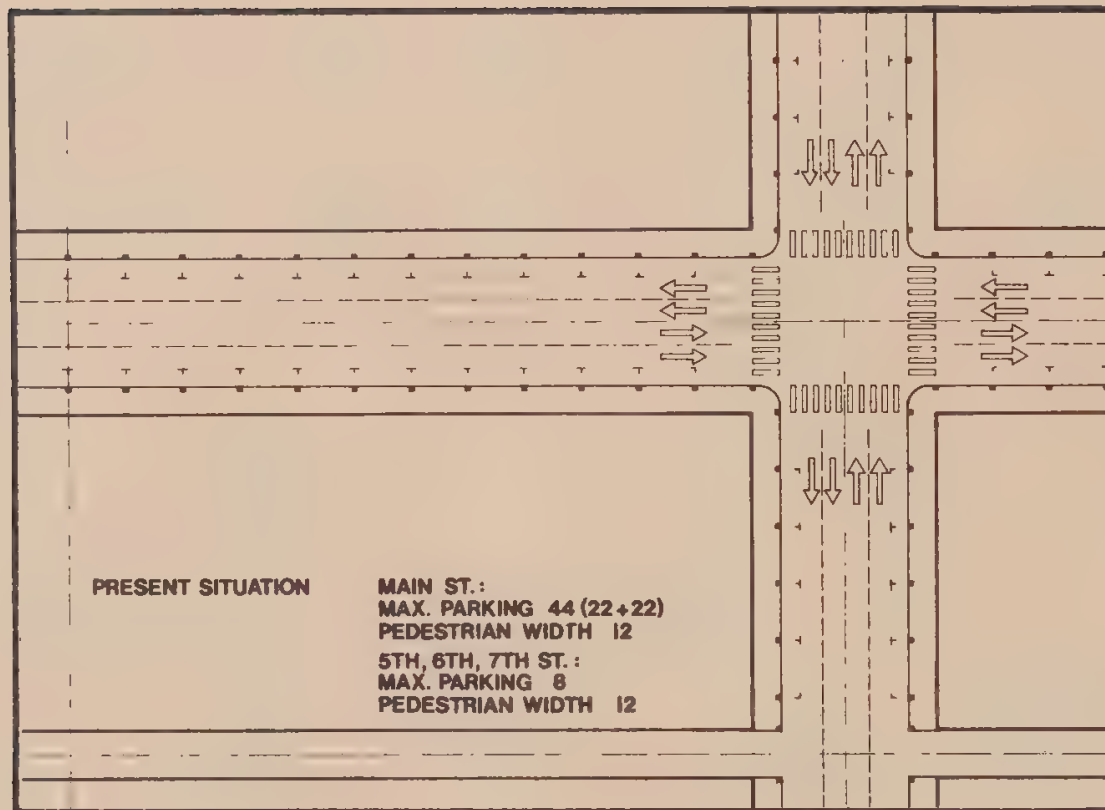
To this end, it is recommended that there be a reduction of traffic speed on Main Street and that through-traffic be directed to adjacent streets. In addition, traffic lanes on Main Street should be reduced from four to two. The street space thus gained could be used for such pedestrian-oriented activities as street cafes, exhibitions, the sale of merchandise and the planting of trees and shrubs and for safer crosswalk areas. The through traffic will be diverted to one way traffic on Broadway in a westerly direction, and on State Street in an easterly direction. Thus, the major traffic flow will have easy access to the parking areas for the business district.

PARKING FACILITIES

Currently, parking facilities are unstructured. Long and short-term parking occurs wherever space is available. As already discussed in the Landuse section, the location of parking areas often disrupts the continuity and appearance of the shopping district.

The following recommendations are made:





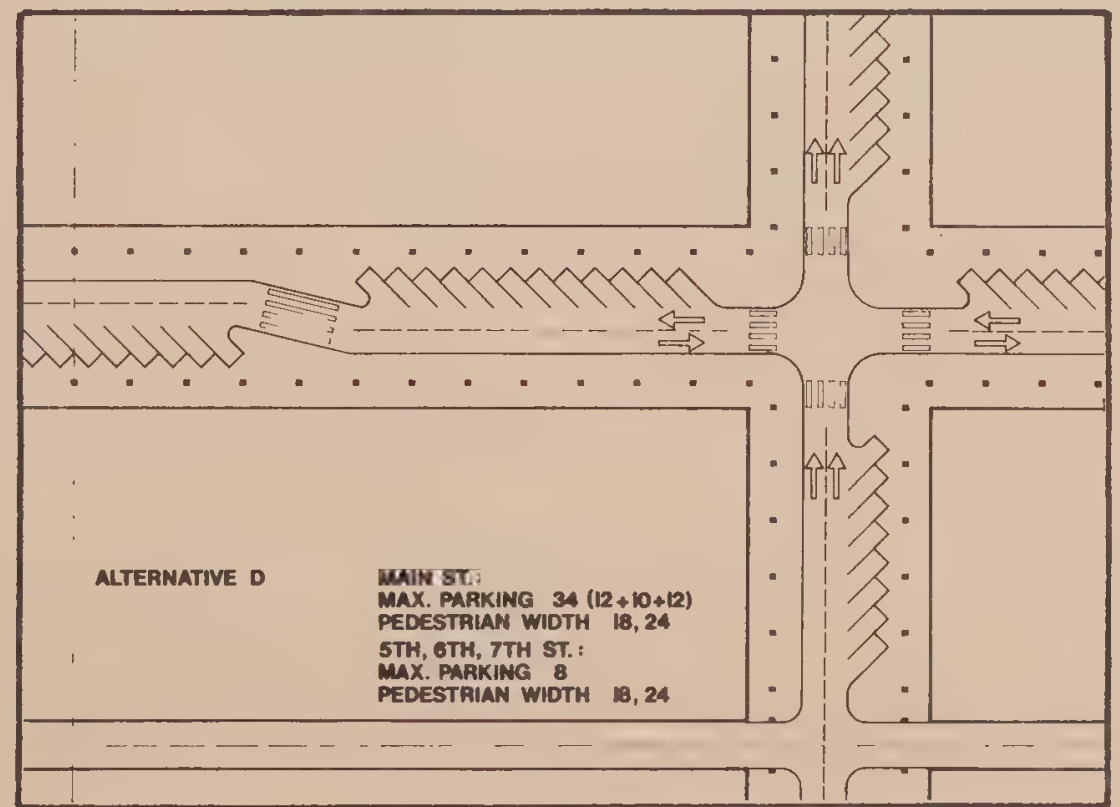
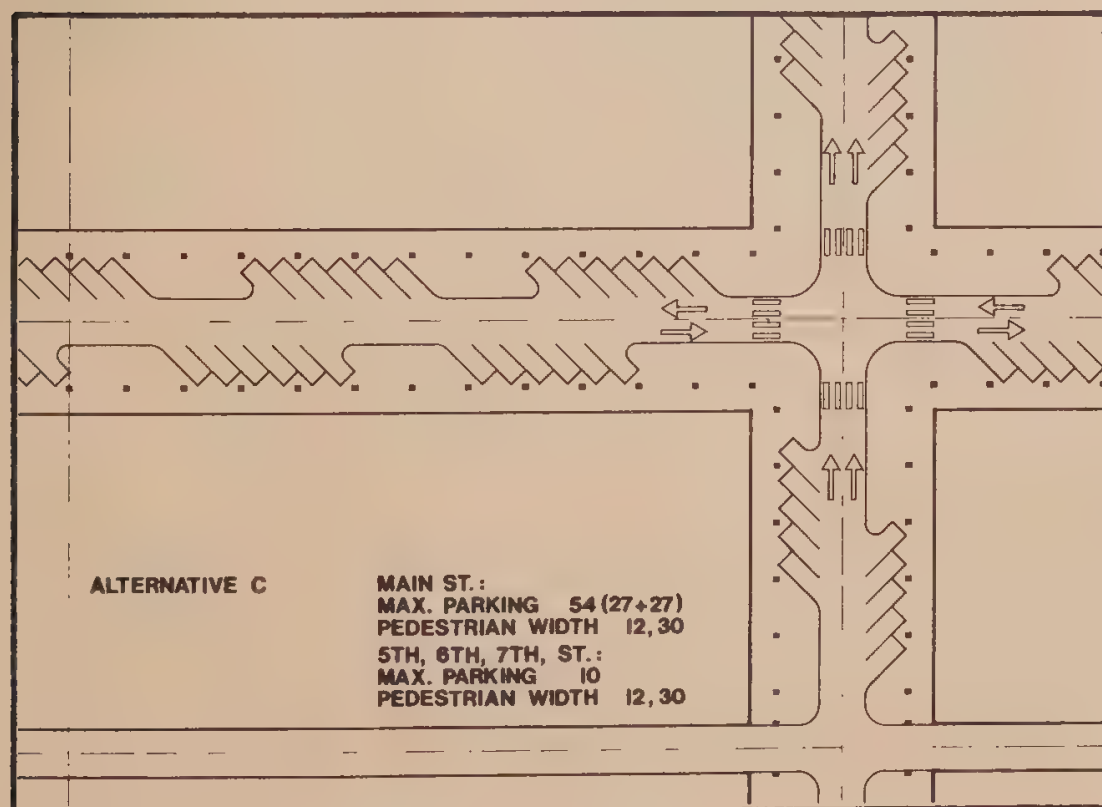
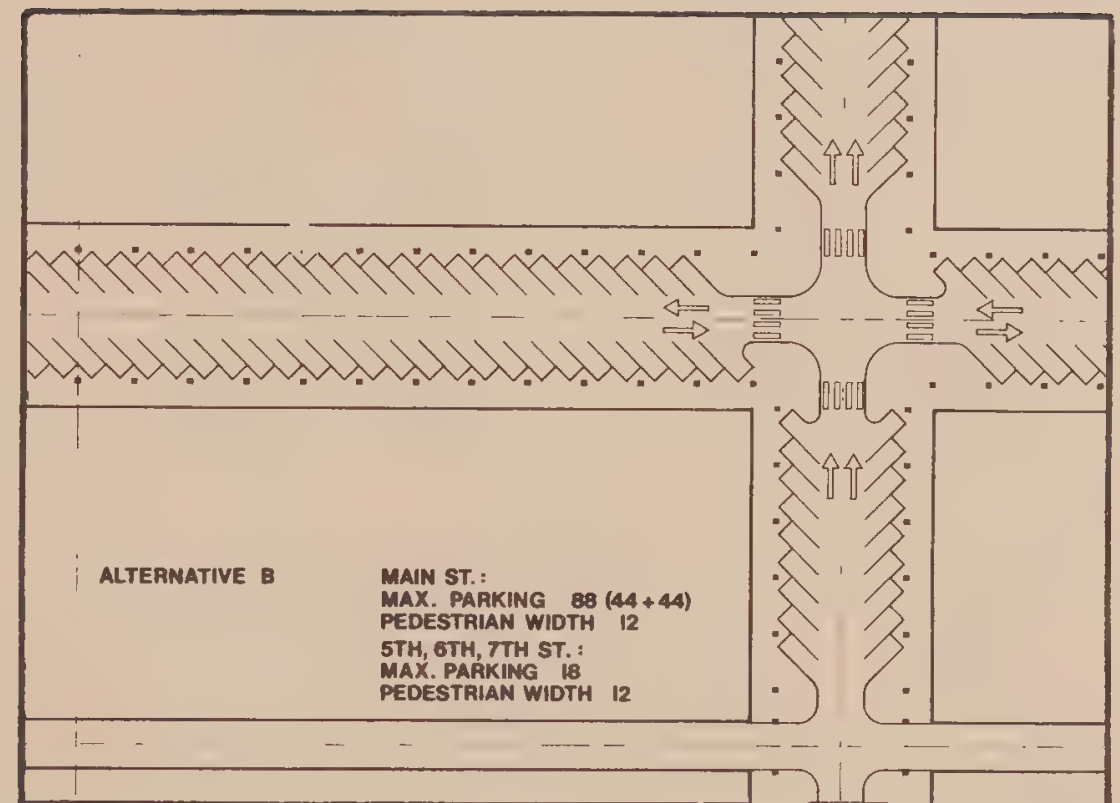
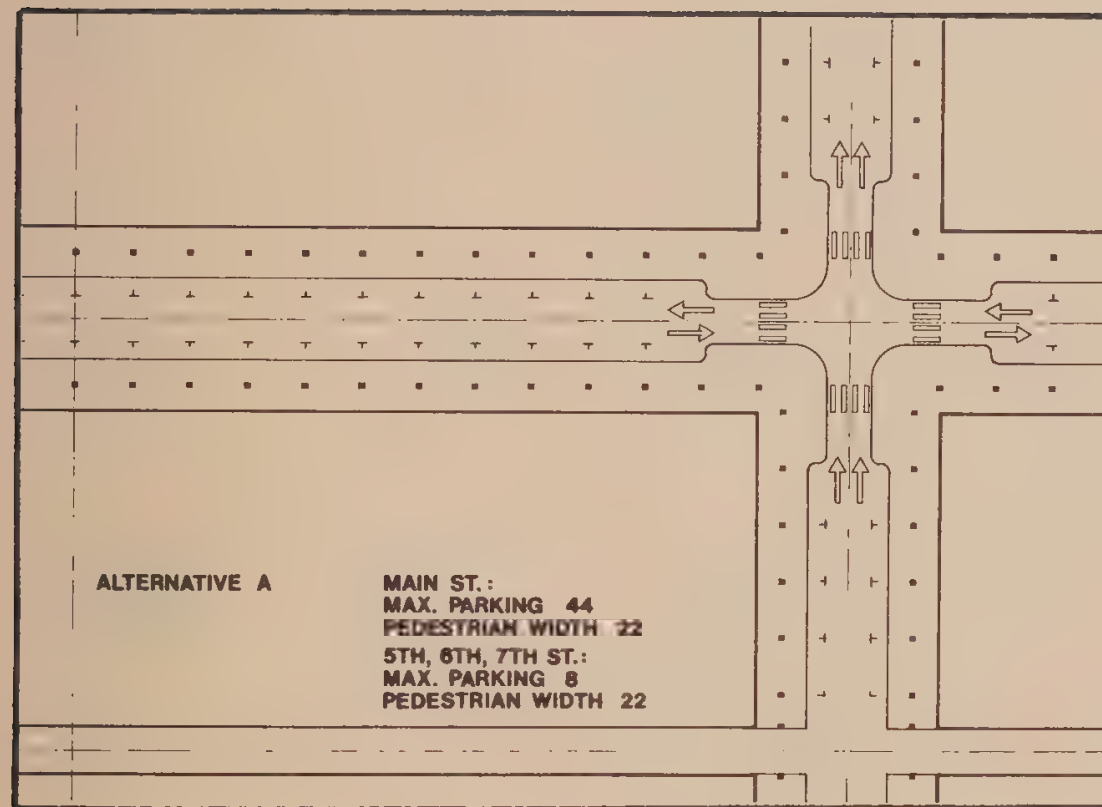
1. Main Street Parking

Parking on Main Street should be restricted to short term parking (i.e., for shoppers who come only to pick up a specific item from a specific store). Parking geometry should follow the pattern depicted in Alternative C. This alternative is advantageous from the following points of view:

- a. It provides sidewalk areas that are wide enough for various pedestrian activities. This makes the solution more attractive than Alternatives A and B.
- b. It allows for adjustment of the number of parking spaces needed individually for any section of Main Street, while still allowing at least the number of parking stalls that are available today (advantage over A).

- c. Alternative C allows for widening of the sidewalk wherever needed, on opposite sides of the street simultaneously if necessary (advantage over Alternative D). In general it provides the highest flexibility of all solutions.

Main Street with its 56' width from curb to curb fulfills the minimum requirements for 45° parking with traffic moving in both directions. The Los Angeles standards depicted on Page assume walls on both sides. Since the width of parking stalls at 45° measured along the curb coincides with the normal rhythm of the arcade columns, parking space can be arranged in such a way that the right front fender always points to an arcade opening, which indirectly increases the actual space available.



2. Parking District

The main parking area serving the downtown shall be developed as a parking district. The district could serve all commercial developments on Broadway, Main Street, and State Street.

It is important that parking be restricted to the south side of Broadway and the north side of State. No parking lots shall be allowed directly on Main or between developed lots on Broadway or State.

The plan recommends the arrangement of parking in aisles perpendicular to Broadway at State Street in a north-south direction. This arrangement offers two advantages:

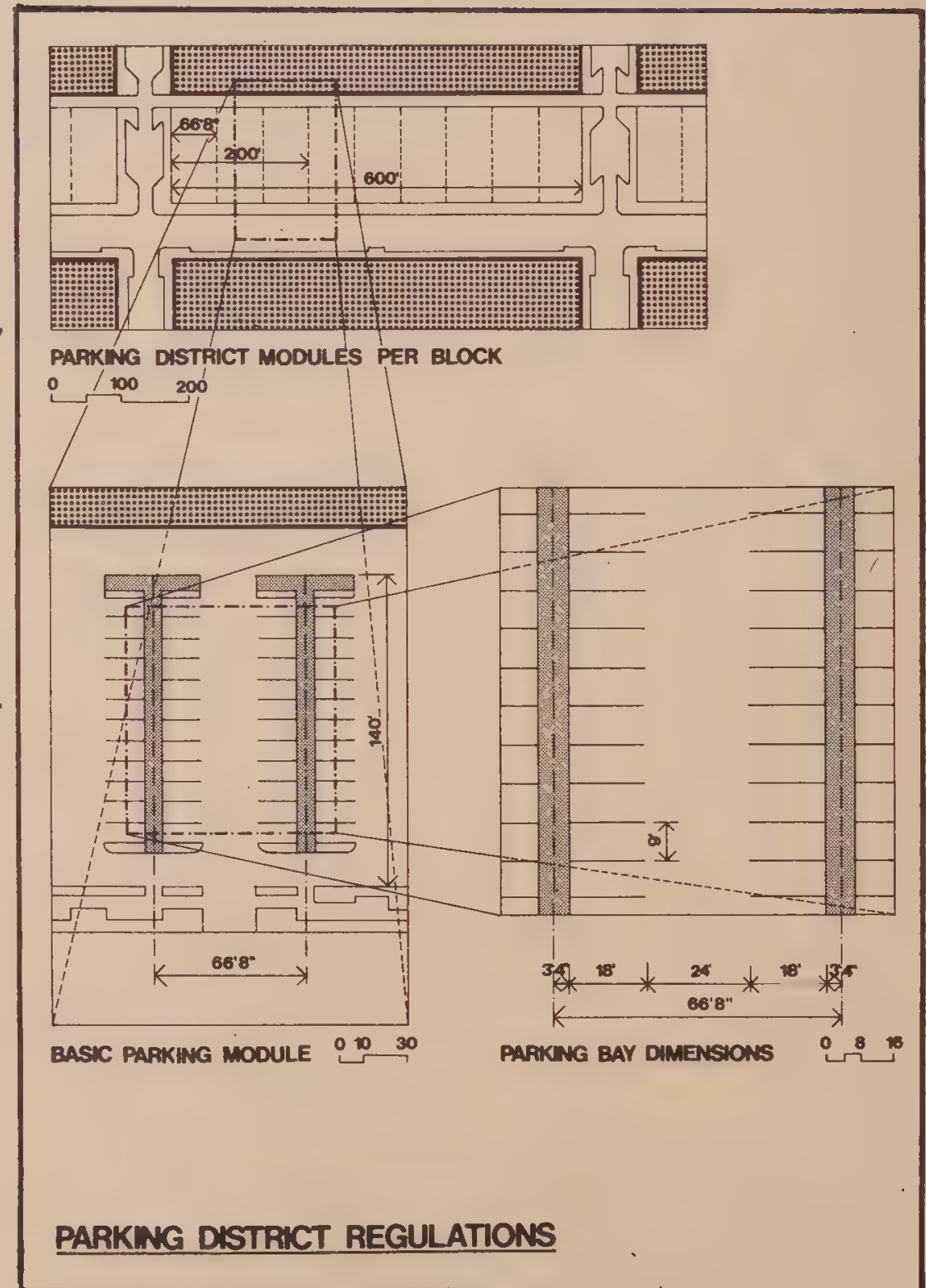
- a. Parking does not form a continuous barrier, but will instead provide an inviting appearance. This is reinforced by shaded pedestrian passageways between the aisles, which lead towards the Main Street shopping area.

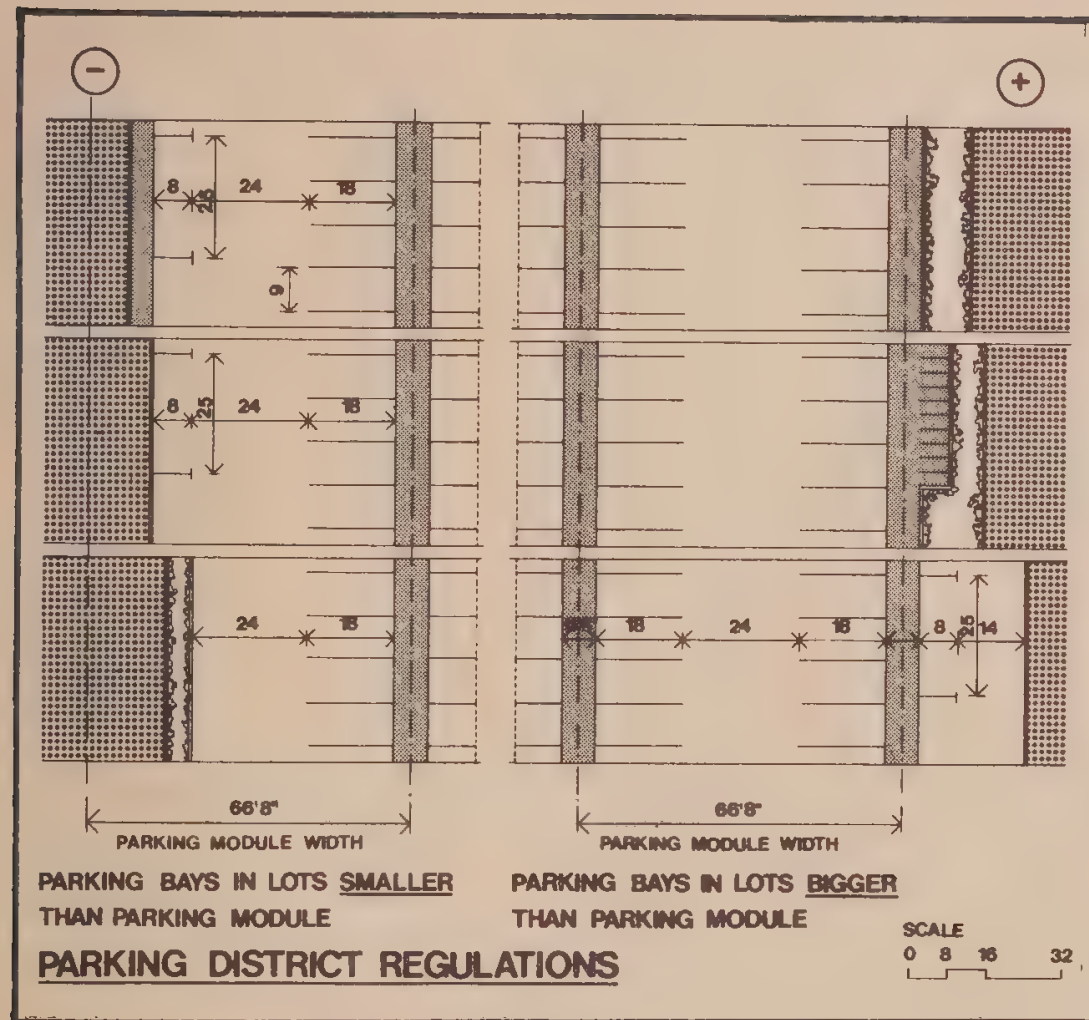
Visibility and a direct pedestrian approach to the shops will make identification and shopping more convenient.

- b. Individual parking aisles can be identified as relating to specific stores. Directories and advertising can be related to the aisles and if sun shade structures are built, can be attached to the sun shade supports.

The following disadvantages should be noted:

- a. If sun shade is provided over parking stalls the shading will be less effective during early morning hours and late evening hours than it would in an east-west oriented parking situation.





This disadvantage, however, is negligible since the early morning and late evening sun is less hot. Steering wheel and drivers seat would be protected for most of the day.

- b. Economically parking lots can only be developed in increments of $66 \frac{2}{3}' = \text{driveway} + 2 \text{ aisles}$, and $45' = \text{driveway} + 1 \text{ aisle}$, whereas a parallel parking arrangement would provide more flexibility with increments of $n \cdot 9'$ ($n = \text{parking stall width}$). However, in fairness to the north-south arrangement, it should be pointed out that east-west parking is uneconomical for individual lots since too much area is taken up by driveways which have to run perpendicular as well as parallel to the street.

3. Parking for the Housing District

Parking for nearby housing should primarily be served from the alley and from the streets. The various alternative parking possibilities are shown on Page . For parking along the street front, special care should be taken in the design of the garages in order to avoid monotonous garage doors as streetfronts. Even the simple variation of carports, garages, and open parking will overcome the problem of monotony.

PEDESTRIAN NETWORK

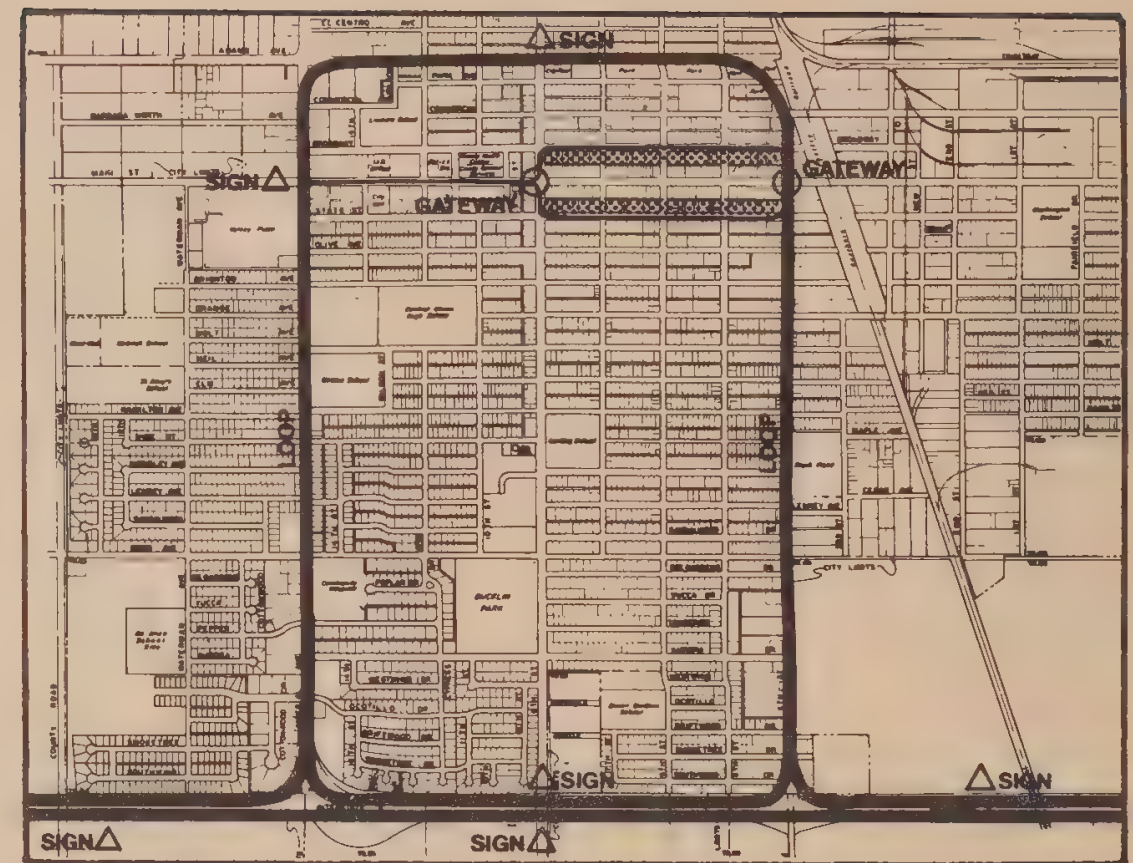
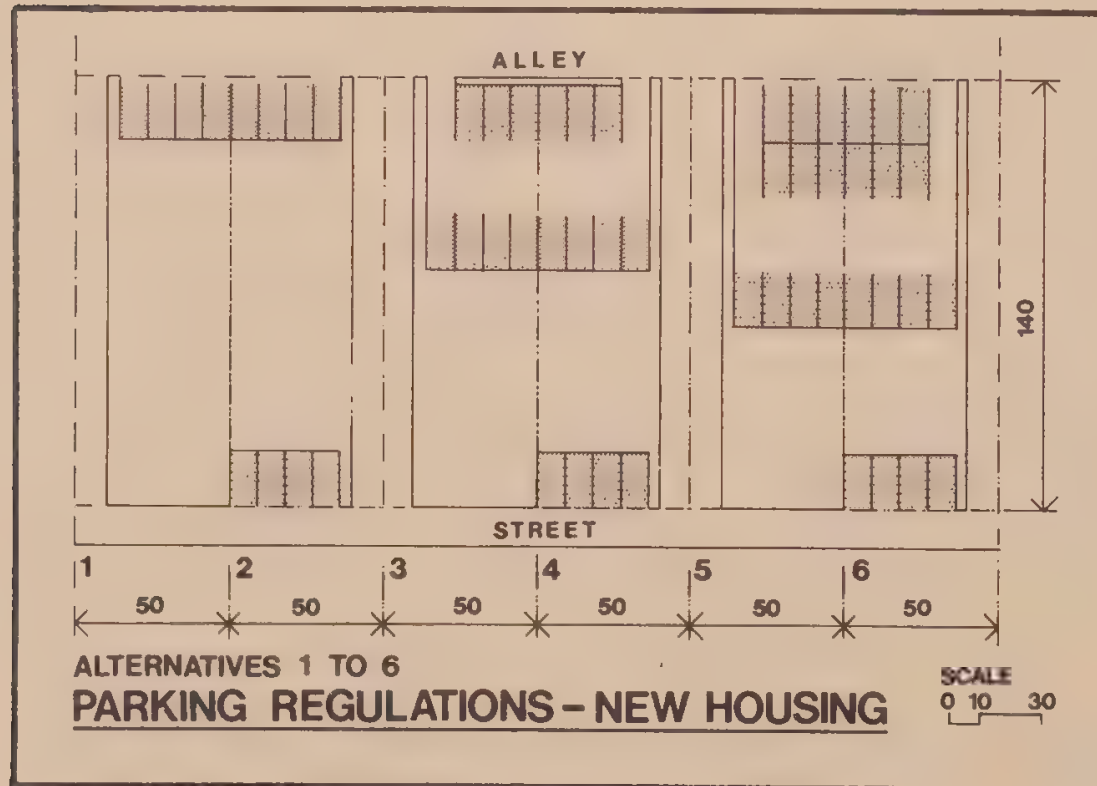
As pointed out in the section on Landuse, a viable downtown depends heavily on the presence of people. A high priority of the downtown redevelopment should be to make pedestrian access to downtown convenient, comfortable and interesting.

The plan proposes a network of pedestrian pathways running perpendicular to the main east-west streets.

These establish the shortest link from the housing district to the commercial areas. As proposed, all units should be accessible from these pathways or from the existing street sidewalks.

The most important link within this pedestrian network is the connection from the commercial parking areas to Main Street. It is essential, for the active use of Main Street, that a pedestrian passageway be incorporated into many of the future building projects on Main Street. The example of the "mini-mall" between 5th and 6th Street shows how a passageway can be developed even on a minimum sized lot.

Public passageways should have preference over the semi-private passageways that are created by opening additional store entrances from the parking side. Such additional back entrances tend to bring shoppers in contact only with the store that they set out to see, whereas entrances to the stores from Main Street

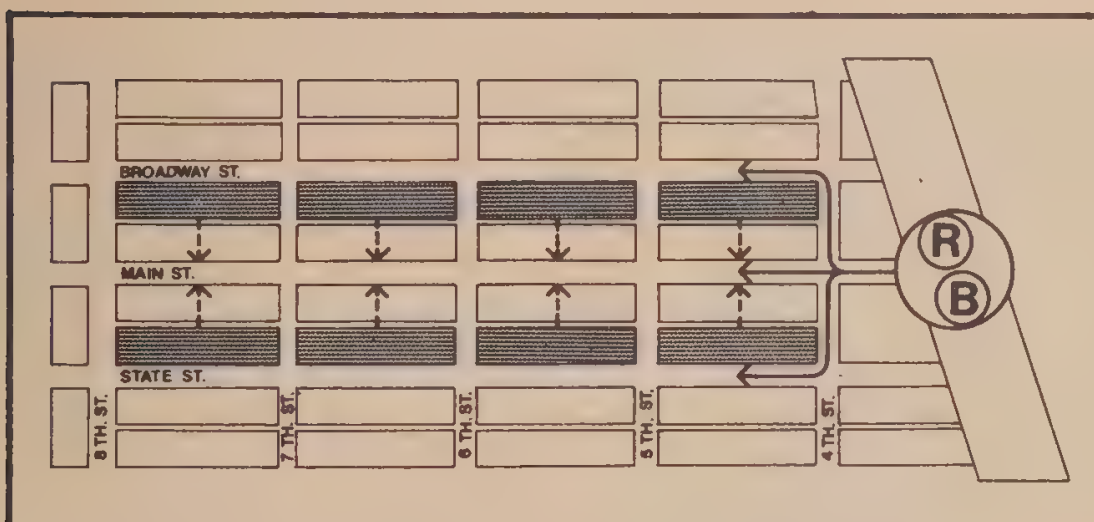
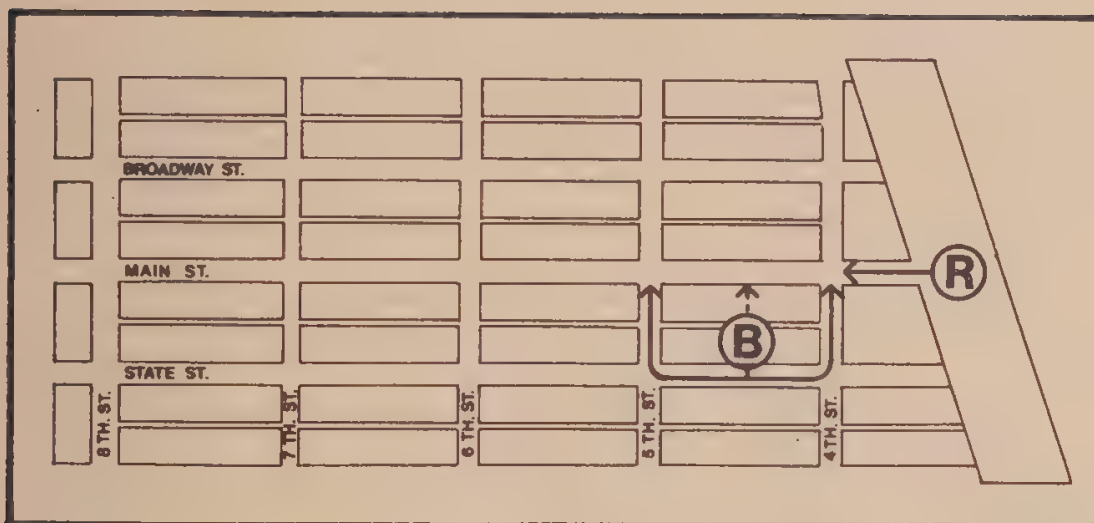


tend to foster additional window shopping and spontaneous shopping. One or two passageways per block should be sufficient. If these passageways are developed they should be pleasant, clean, active, well lighted and safe for the user. Most blocks have enough vacant or underdeveloped lots left to create the necessary pedestrian links. Where a block is completely built up, as in the case of south Main Street between 6th and 7th Street, semi-private passageways will have to serve as links.

B. TRAFFIC OUTSIDE DOWNTOWN REGIONAL TRAFFIC

BUSINESS LOOP

The success of the downtown area as the major shopping center of El Centro will, to a large extent, depend on the visibility and accessibility to the area. The introduction of a business loop



from the freeway is of vital importance. The business loop should start at the freeway off-ramp of 4th Street, go up 4th Street, continue into Adams and return via Imperial to the freeway.

Since the loop does not run directly through the downtown, great care should be taken to increase visibility at the points where the loop connects to State, Main and Broadway. This is true for 4th Street as well as for Imperial. Advertising, street banners, directories, and traffic signs should guide drivers to the parking areas along Broadway and State Street.

RAILROAD

It has already been pointed out that reviving tourist trains as an attraction would demonstrate downtown from the perspective of the early decades of this century. With ever-increasing railroad nostalgia, a historical steamtrain-ride connecting Brawley, Calexico and Mexicali could become economically feasible. El Centro could be an important attraction representing an early agricultural pioneer town and as a leisure shopping and restaurant center. Even though such a trainride would not return the train station to its original importance as an entrance to the city, it would certainly set the tone for tourism. El Centro, with its attractive Winter climate, could exploit tourism in a way similar to Palm Springs. A prerequisite, however, is a strong city planning effort that emphasizes the unique qualities and points of interest in El Centro.

BUS TRAFFIC

The Greyhound bus station is currently located in an area of State Street which is proposed for development as a parking zone. The location within the parking zone is fortunate, as space needed for the arrival and departure of buses would not disrupt the continuity of buildings as it would had the station been located on Main Street. Unfortunately, the bus station opens only to State Street. It is recommended that a passage way be planned from the station to Main Street as part of rebuilding in the vacant lot on Main Street which lies directly to the rear of the Greyhound station. A new entrance to the station should be planned which would provide a more attractive and relaxing entry point to El Centro for tourists and other newcomers.

As mentioned in the section on Economics, an even more attractive and better solution, in the long

run, would be to relocate the Greyhound station from the parking lot on State Street to the area next to the railroad station. The area around the railroad station is unplanned and scattered with individually developed buildings. There is much unused land and great potential for future development. The creation of a bus station that would serve Greyhound and all other future bus traffic could be a catalyst to reorganize this area and make it into an attractive entry point to the city.

The economics of this proposal should be studied in greater depth before any improvements are made to the current Greyhound station and its surroundings.



6

DESIGN
CONSIDERATIONS
COMMERCIAL

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

In order to attract attention and to maintain a clientele through merchandising, it is essential that the efforts to revitalize the El Centro downtown area be more than a cosmetic venture. The presentation must be in sharp contrast to the current subdued nature of the development. People must want to visit the area because it will be a showplace, something to talk about and attract visitors from everywhere.

Efforts of this magnitude have been accomplished in many parts of the world where the same threats to the older areas existed from new, planned centers. To maintain an economic position, the only answer is to provide an atmosphere that reflects special qualities. Imitation is not usually successful, while an understanding and exploration of the uniqueness of the city will lead to an innovative and original solution.

A. ARCHITECTURAL CONTINUITY

The quality of a city may be derived from the quality of its individual buildings. But in most cases there are few buildings of outstanding individual quality. This does not mean the city has no architectural or visual quality. However, quality may also consist in the overall appearance of groups of elements; the collective form may be more important than the individual characteristics. El Centro is a good example of this point. Except for very few historically or architecturally outstanding buildings, such as the main Post Office, the individual buildings do not demonstrate unique characteristics.

However, the way individual buildings are grouped and relate to each other gives the downtown area

an appearance that is unparalleled in the rest of the city and perhaps even in the rest of Southern California. The uniqueness of this collective urban design is based on a few principles which are adhered to by almost every individual building throughout the area:

- Covered sidewalks
- Arcades
- Facia above the arcades
- Texture of buildings
- Scale of buildings
- Zero setback

El Centro downtown can currently boast of more than 6,000 feet of arcades. This is a unique feature that no similar shopping corridor can equal. (Historically, Bologna, Italy, can demonstrate the effectiveness of arcades.)

The most important design requirement, therefore, should be to continue this theme. All new construction and remodeling in the downtown commercial zone as indicated in Plan No. should follow the six principles listed above.

It should be pointed out that it is mostly the more recent buildings in the downtown area that have neglected the collective aspects of the design and are, therefore, detrimental to a unique and powerful image of El Centro.

Many architects have become insensitive to issues of collective urban design and to vernacular or local architecture. Thus, modern shopping centers tend to look alike throughout the United States and many such centers tend to have the same appearance all over the world.

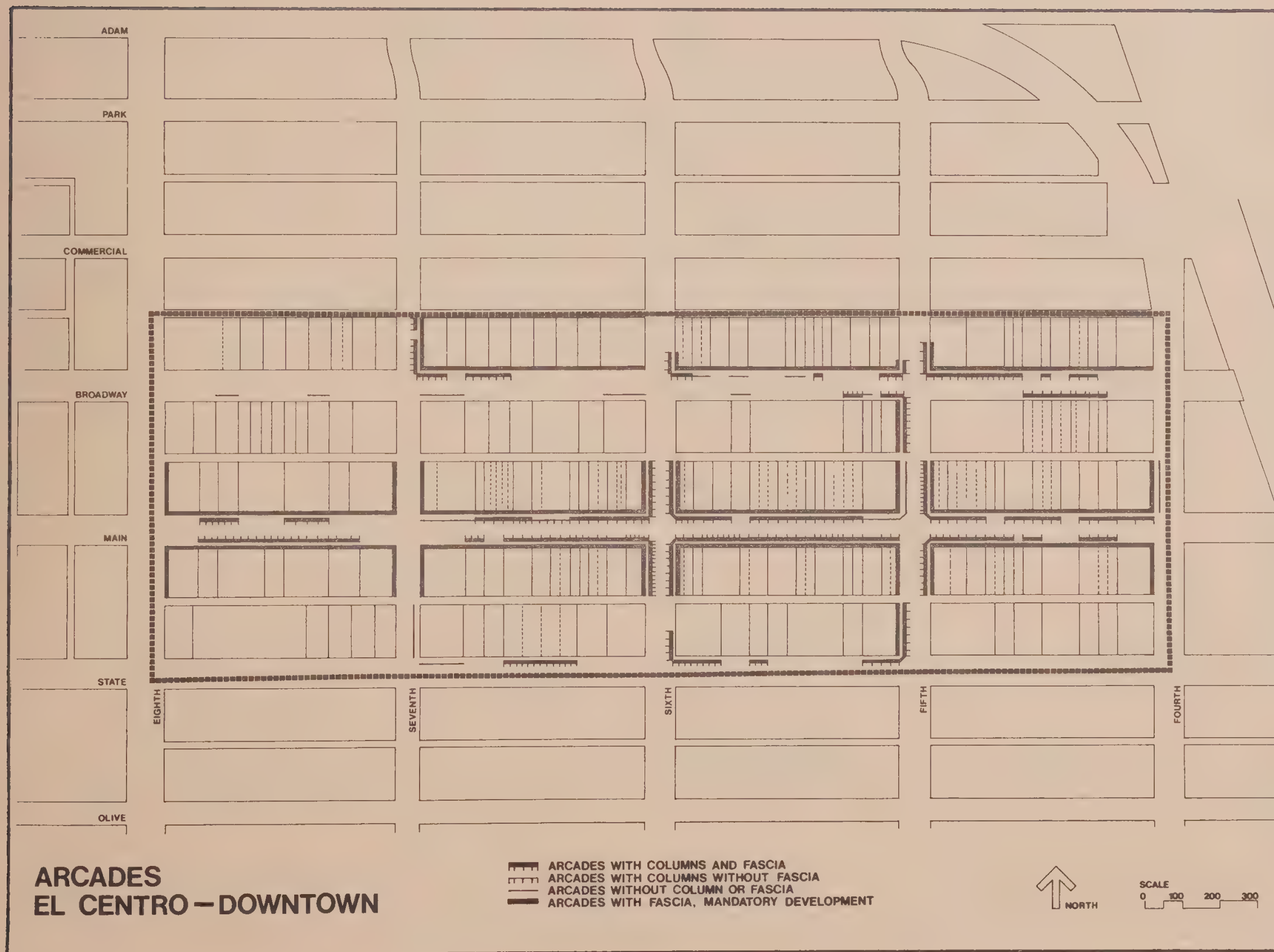


It cannot be emphasized enough that the use of the arcade was chosen not only for its picturesqueness, but was based on an understanding of climatic conditions. It is a building type particularly well suited to desert areas.

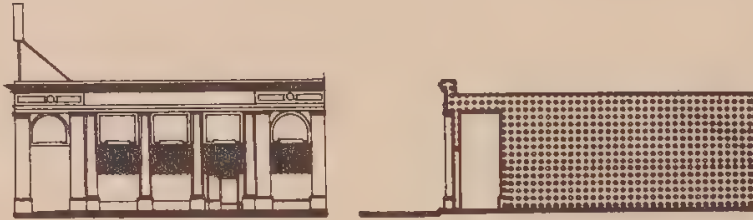
Many modern buildings were able to ignore climatic considerations only because cheap energy was available and mechanical equipment was able to make up for climatically insensitive designs. With the future of cheap energy in doubt, it seems to be a good time to return to the more energy conscious designs of the founders of the city.

In spite of the existing 6,000 linear feet of arcades, it should be pointed out that the arcade theme will only be fully appreciated when all vacant lots are filled. The party walls between two stores were never designed to be seen and some of the most unsightly conditions exist where the continuity of the arcades is interrupted. Highest priority should, therefore, be placed on filling the empty lots on Main Street, Broadway and State within the proposed arcade zone. Once all empty lots in the arcade zone are filled, El Centro will be able to point to almost 10,000 feet of arcades as one of its most unique features.

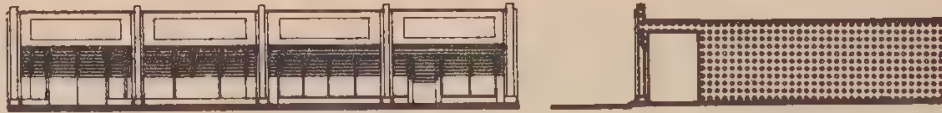




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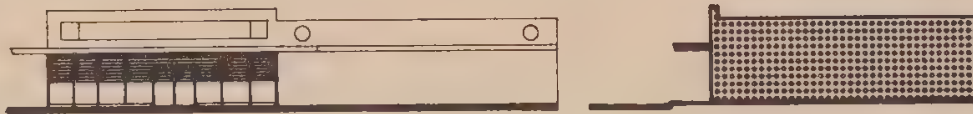
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4



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6



7



BUILDING TYPES

While vacant lots and vacant stores are the most visually disruptive elements of the street fronts, a survey revealed that certain other design features also destroy the continuity of the total complex. While variations of the theme contribute to greater variety, certain design elements contribute to a more chaotic environment.

In the survey, we classified seven different kinds of buildings:

1. Landmarks
2. Buildings with arcades, facia, and walkway cover
3. Buildings without columns but with facia
4. Buildings without facia
5. Buildings without columns and facia but with walkway cover
6. Buildings without walkway cover, columns or facia
7. Buildings without walkway cover, columns or facia that, in addition, violate the zero setback rule.

The Landmark classification should be reserved for buildings with public functions. Good examples are the movie theaters on Main Street. Landmarks tend to contribute to greater variety and change the continuity in a positive sense.

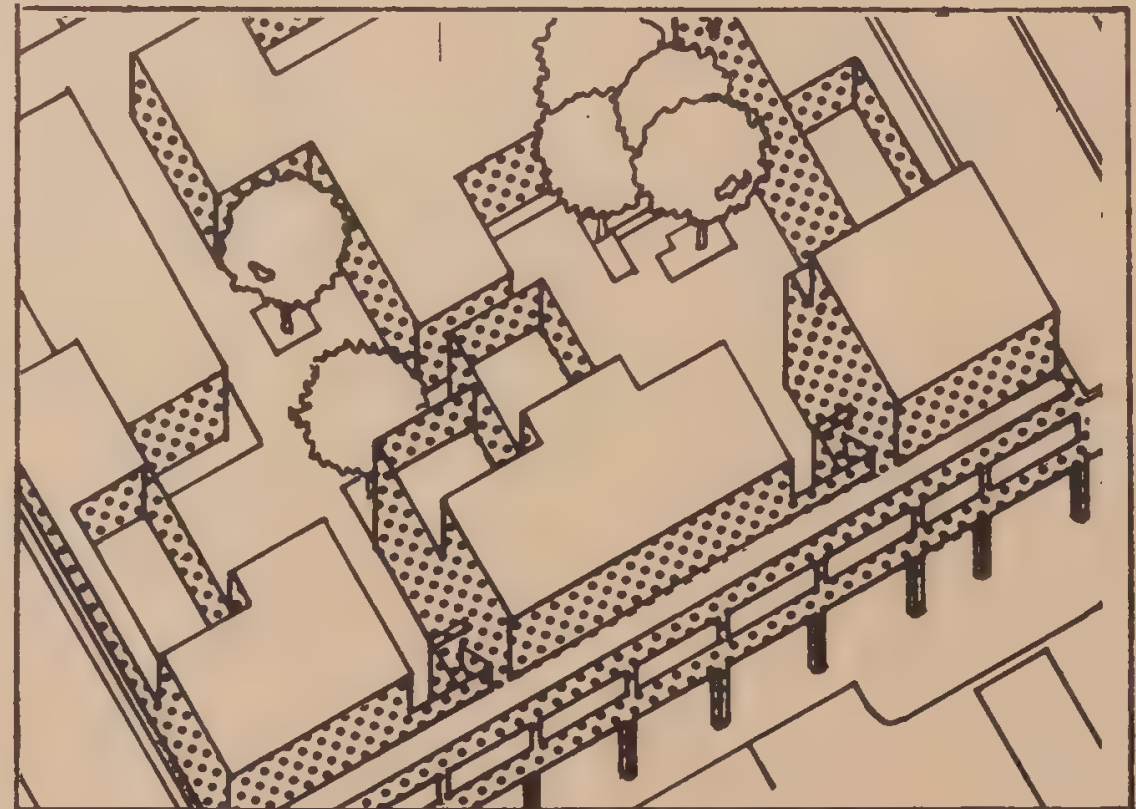
Building types numbered 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 above tend to look incomplete and foreign in the context of the El Centro theme. They should not be used for new construction in the arcade zone. Building type number 7 is the most disruptive building type.

B. PEDESTRIAN ACTIVITIES

As pointed out in the section on Landuse, it is important that the design of the downtown area explore a theme unique to El Centro. A design should also explore features which emphasize the uniqueness of each area within downtown. This is particularly important for Broadway and State Street. These streets should be treated with as much respect as Main Street, but should be different from it.

To emphasize the difference between Main Street and Broadway, we propose the following:

- Main Street will be a linear commercial strip emphasizing pedestrian movement under the arcades, and will have rest places or gathering points, such as sidewalk cafes, from which one can engage in "people watching."
- According to the traffic concept, Main Street will be an environment with pedestrian priority, while still allowing for a certain amount of parking and low speed shopping traffic.
- Broadway will emphasize courtyard developments, away from the street. These courtyards emphasize rest, eating, entertainment, and people watching, but with less movement.
- The courtyards will be interconnected so that it is possible to reach the courtyard next door easily. One can choose between various international restaurants, can listen to mariachi, Greek or Indian music, sit in cool, air-conditioned rooms or under sunshades outdoors, and simply enjoy life.
- Broadway will be a street for through traffic and parking access, but with its courtyards



oriented away from the noisy traffic and exclusively for pedestrian use. The courtyards will connect directly to the residential areas to the north.

C. PAVING

Since the downtown shopping area is designed around pedestrian activities, the paving of streets and sidewalks should be a major design feature. Various paving patterns should be used to designate pedestrian areas and vehicular circulation space. Wherever fast through traffic is discouraged, level changes in the paving may be used. Slight bumps, reflectors, and color and texture differences in the pavement, will remind the drivers that pedestrians have priority in the area.

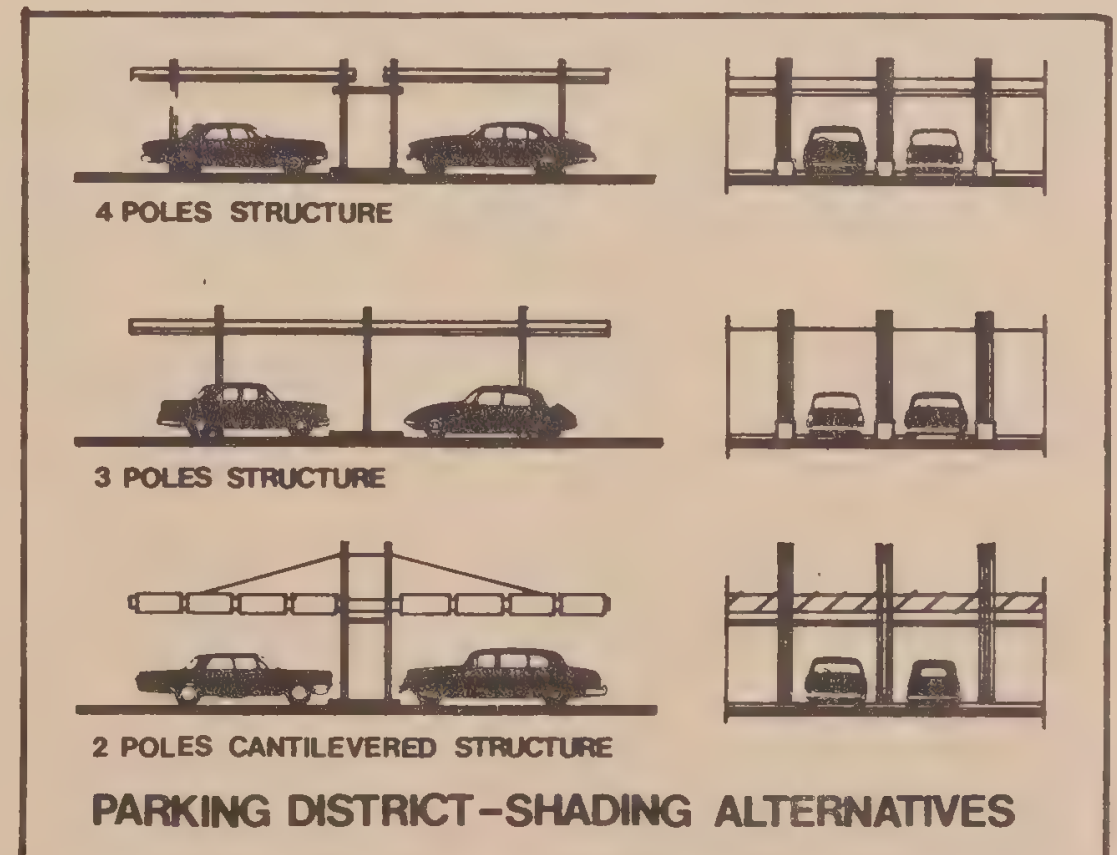
Planters give guidance to pedestrian movements and separate sidewalk areas from car traffic. The plan recommends planters which are strictly modular in order to achieve greater economy through prefabrication.

D. SHADED AREAS

El Centro downtown is very fortunate to have such an enormous area of shaded arcades which create a pleasant atmosphere for shoppers. Over and above the existence and expansion of the arcades, it is proposed that shaded parking areas also be provided. The idea of shaded parking was originally suggested by downtown businessmen who described the worst part of shopping in El Centro as coming back to a car that seemed to explode from heat and having ones fingers burnt when touching the steering wheel. Overhead shading for parking is a common design feature in countries in the south Mediterranean (Greece, Turkey, Italy). We have responded to this concern by designing a colorful umbrellalike struc-

ture. After analyzing various alternative solutions (see diagram), this structure was chosen according to the following criteria:

1. Traffic safety: No columns are in the way of moving cars. Maintenance cost, therefore, will be lower.
2. Economy: The light-weight prefabricated structure will keep down the costs of materials and onsite construction. However, no definite costs can be calculated as part of this study. In the end, the final cost will depend on the time that the development is authorized and the detailing of the structure and structural engineering for earthquake stability and wind loads. This work is on an architectural level and will require a separate architectural contract.



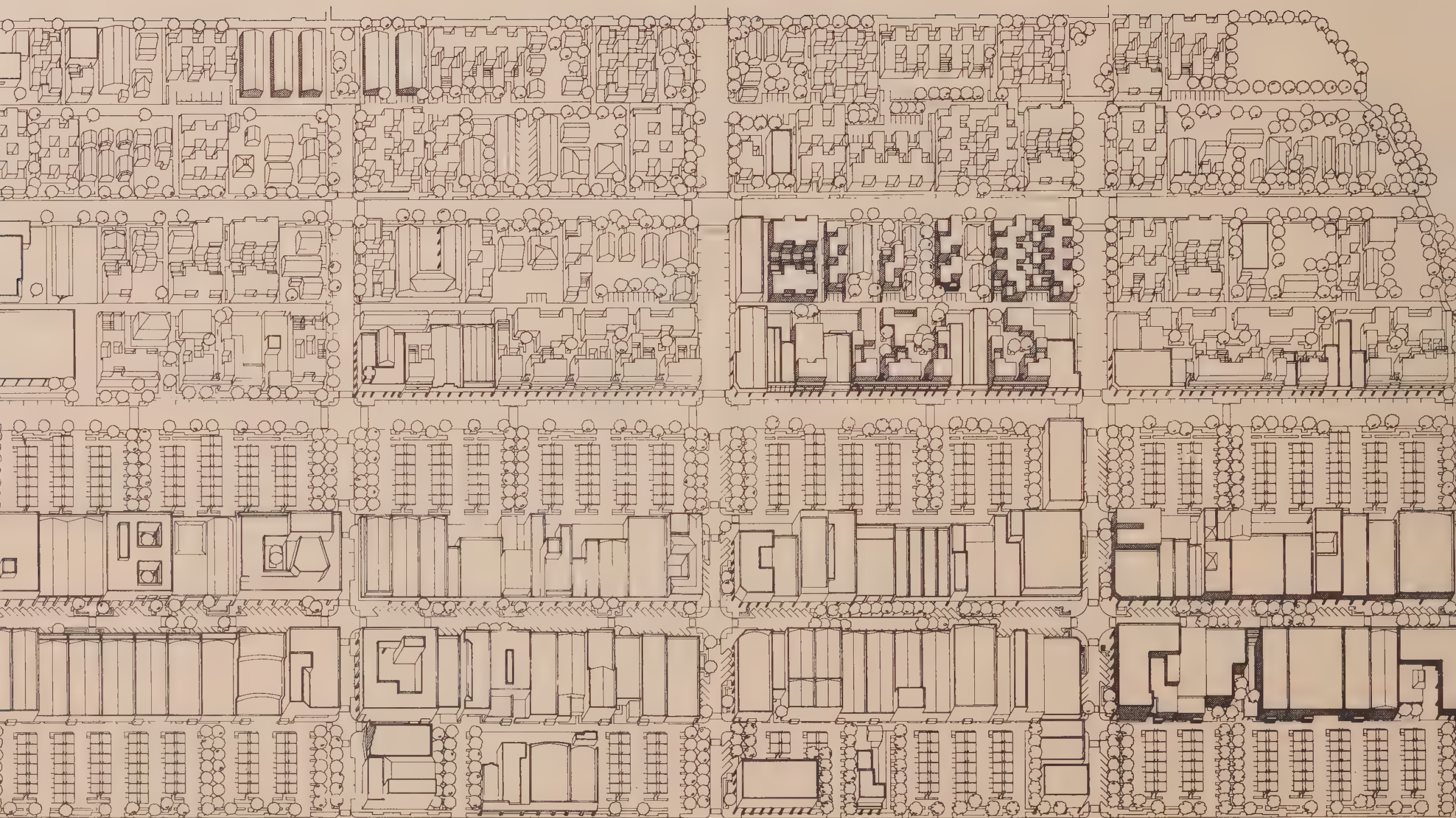
3. General atmosphere: The colorful shading material will enliven the back side of Main Street. The lightweight structure will create a delightful juxtaposition to the heavy construction of the buildings on the alley side.
4. Color coding: Colors will be different on each block and will help identify different store clusters.
5. Image: The unusual looking structure should capture the atmosphere of the lightweight shading devices of Mediterranean or Mexican outdoor markets. At the same time, it should give El Centro a unique image which will be remembered by visitors, and become something of a trademark for the redevelopment of Main Street.
6. Shaded pedestrian walkways: The double row of columns in the center facilitate a shaded pedestrian path as well. It seems reasonable that once such effort is made to protect cars from the sun, it should follow that it is also important to protect people as they go from their cars to the shops.

trees. Once the fast growing trees die, in approximately 15 years, the main trees will be ready to provide shading.

Since the complete coverage of all parking would result in a monotonous sequence of structures along Broadway, it is proposed that these man made shading devices be alternated with tree shading. Rows of trees could be used to signify a link from pedestrian passageways to Main Street to pedestrian crosswalks on Broadway and State Street. Access from housing areas to Main Street would occur mainly along these tree shaded paths.

It is suggested that two types of trees be planted simultaneously: a fast growing tree with short life expectancy and slower growing, longer lasting







E. ENTRANCE GATES AND COLLECTIVE ADVERTISING

The Gateway advertising structures described previously in the Economic and Circulation sections, will be an important feature for the entire downtown district. The design of such a gateway goes beyond the scope of this study. It should be commissioned as a separate contract on the basis of a competition among architects, industrial designers, sculptors or commercial artists.

In addition to the Gateway, collective advertising should be part of the shading structures. The superstructure of the shading, which is exposed to the main access streets, could be used to attach directories and advertise each individual store in a coordinated fashion.

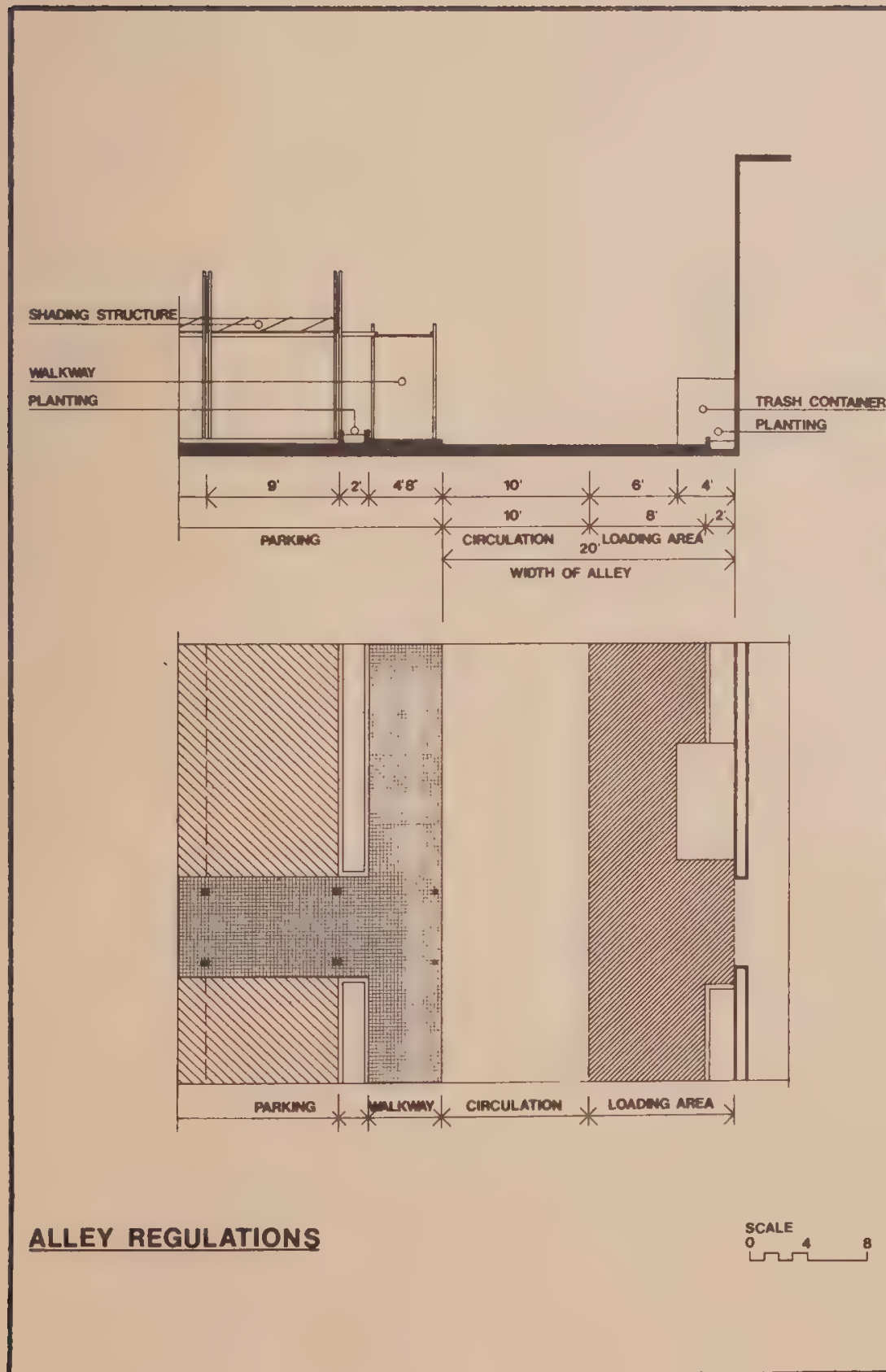
Signs in the downtown area are often uncoordinated and often weaken the architectural character of buildings. We have photographically surveyed all facades on Main Street and Broadway and have studied the various types of signs in order to develop a special sign ordinance for downtown.

We had originally intended to (1) regulate the size of the sign in relation to the size of the facia (not to the size of the building), (2) regulate the amount of information and the minimum size of letters, (3) regulate the location where signs could be posted.

While testing the ordinance we found that, for buildings with special architectural treatments of the facia, no regulation could be sensitive enough to do justice to the architecture and the sign in any other than a case by case basis. Furthermore, we found that some of the most effective signs in the form of supergraphics cannot be regulated with such ordinances and would therefore be excluded. We believe that the regulations,

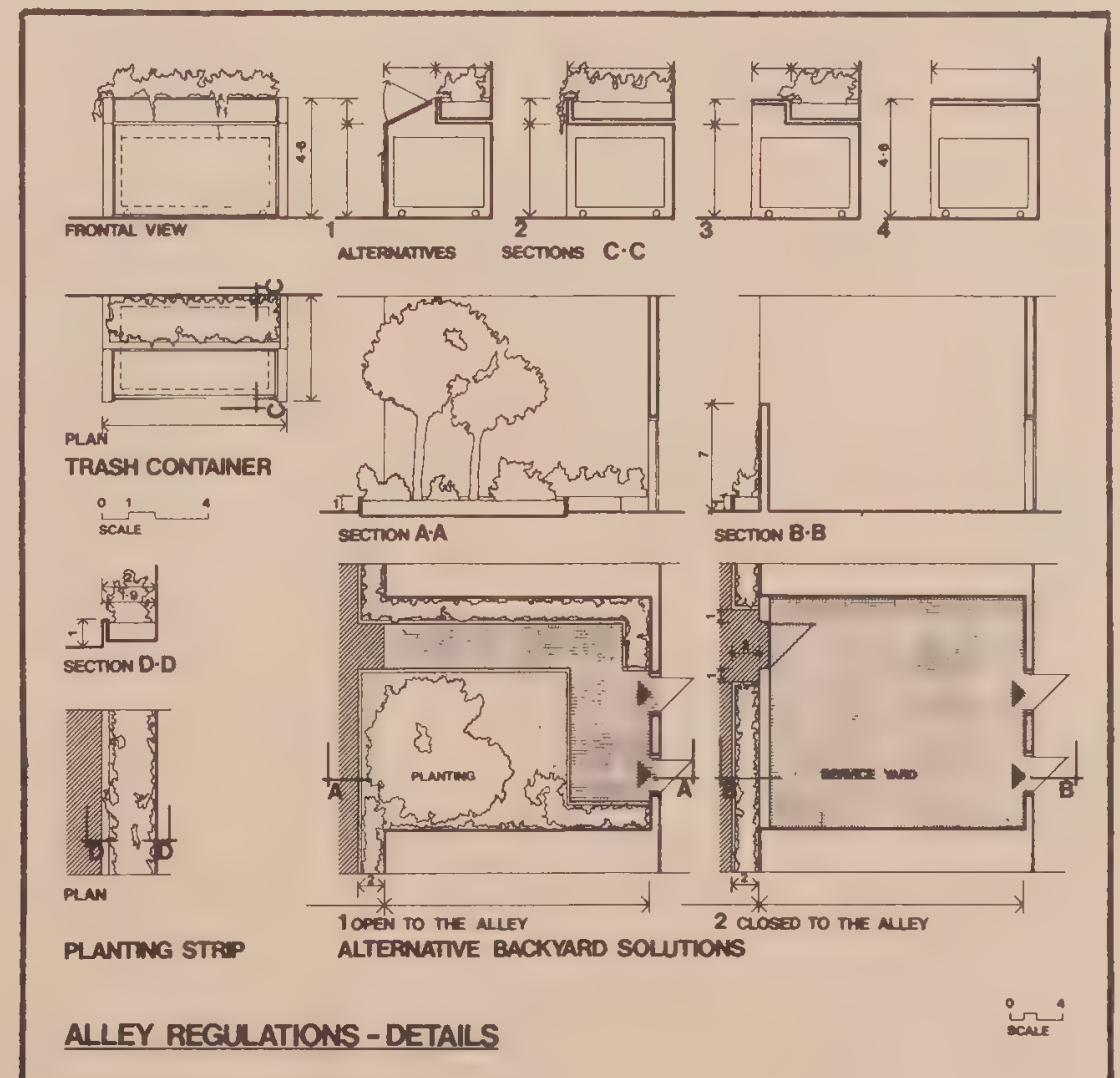
no matter how they are formulated, could prevent the least attractive signs from happening, but would at the same time not allow many inventive and effective signs. We would like to suggest, therefore, that signage be approved on a case by case basis by a special sign review board consisting of architects, graphic artists and townspeople.

The only specific recommendation we can make is to limit advertising lettering to: (1) the facia above the arcades, (2) roof top structures that do not extend beyond the permitted height of the building or extend out beyond the property lines, (3) inside the covered arcades to special overhead boards that are independent of the architecture, (4) to the store windows and doors. (5) No sign shall be allowed on any other surface unless specially approved by a sign review board (see below).



F. ORGANIZATION OF ALLEYS

In most American cities alleys seem to be in a state of neglect. This is no different in El Centro. However, what is different in downtown El Centro is that the alleys and the backs of buildings become highly visible to shoppers arriving by car who must cross the alley before getting to Main Street. If the alleys remain as unsightly as they are today, with trash containers blocking the traffic at random and backyards becoming junk yards, the future success of the downtown as a major regional shopping center will be in doubt.



The proposed colorful umbrellalike parking shade structures, together with the rows of trees, should help to direct the attention of the shoppers away from the alleys.

However, much can be achieved to reconstruct the alleys at comparatively modest cost. The proposal for the alleys includes the following:

1. Alleys must be repaved and made into a respectable part of the total shopping area.
2. A 2' strip along the buildings is to be dedicated for planting, designed for low maintenance.
3. Trash containers should be located in specially constructed enclosures.
4. Backyards should either be landscaped or shielded from the public view.
5. Alleys should be strictly for vehicular circulation 10' and loading 10' (8' + 2'). Pedestrian circulation should run parallel to the alley on a 4'8' right of way separated from the parking stalls by a planter.

7

DESIGN
CONSIDERATIONS
HOUSING

A. SPECIAL ZONING DISTRICT

As pointed out in the section on Landuse, we recommend the development of a strong residential community in close proximity to downtown.

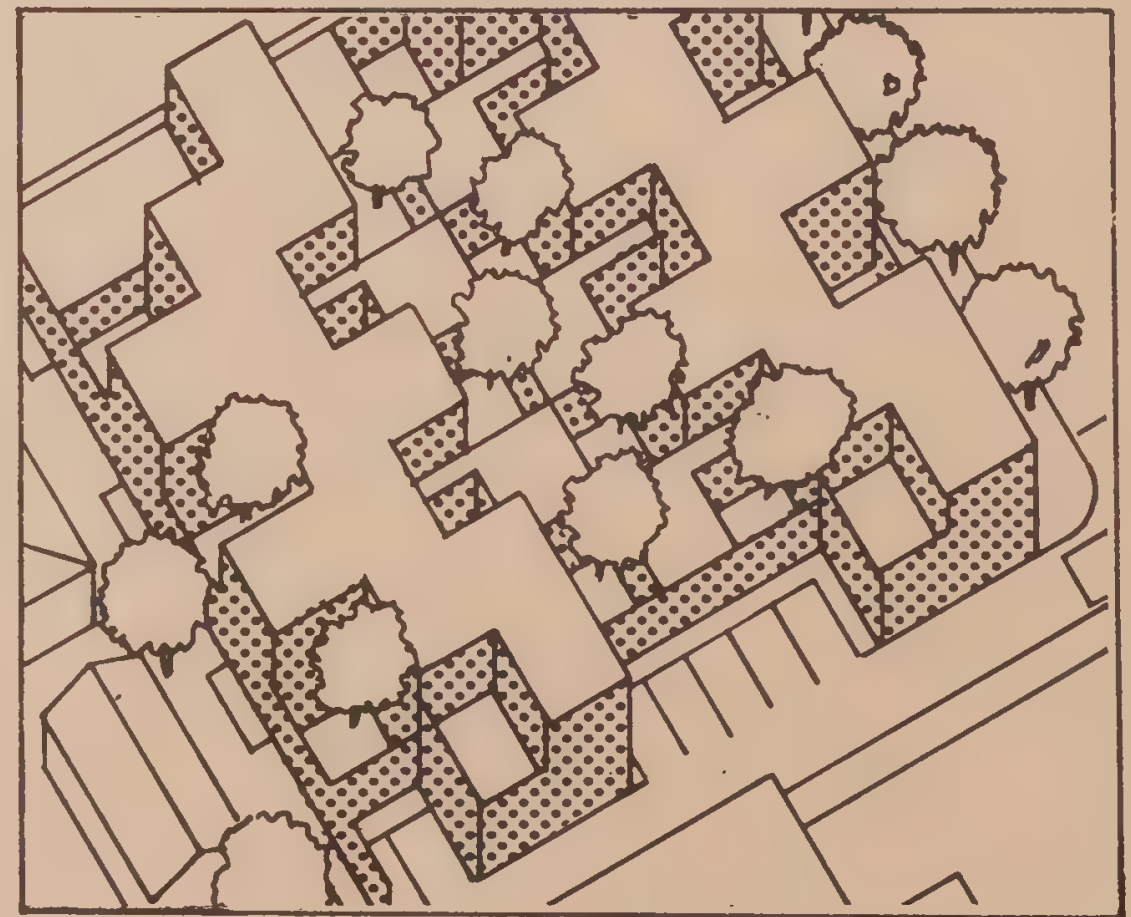
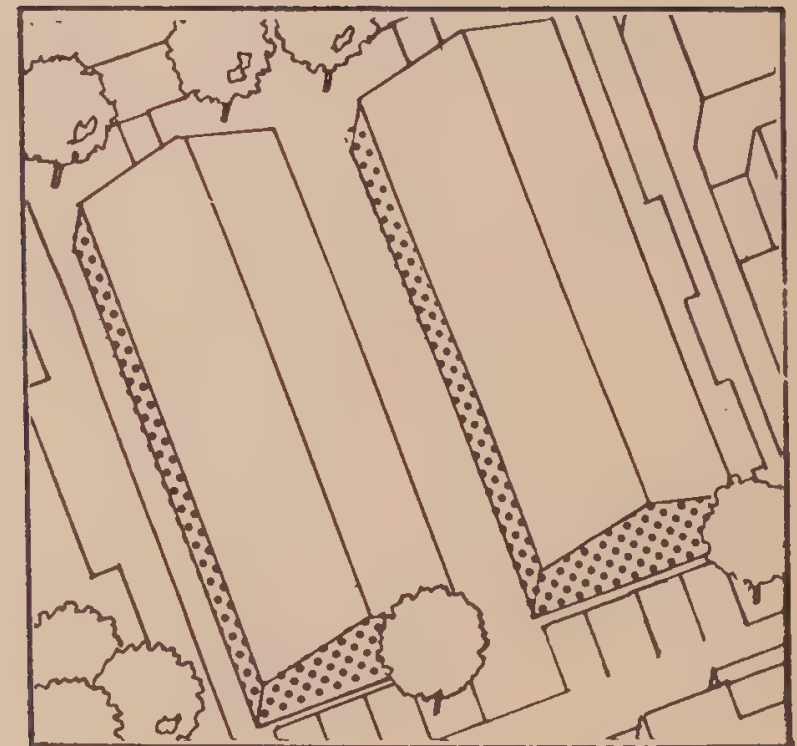
However, the typical R3 housing development, with limited private open spaces, does not appeal to the current lifestyle, particularly in this type of location. Mobile homes, in spite of their lack of permanence and privacy, seem to be more attractive than much of the inner city R3 housing.

The proposal for the downtown area is based on a search for a new alternative that might offer the necessary amenities. Instead of proposing a planned unit development which would require bulldozing of existing buildings and rebuilding at a massive scale, we suggest a special zoning district that would create incentives to developers to build more attractive housing. This zoning district would allow zero setbacks and zero side yards.

A special zoning district has the advantage over a P.U.D. in that little of the existing housing stock that is still in good condition would have to be destroyed at one time, and no large scale land acquisition would be required. This means that years of negotiations and preparatory work which have become so typical for inner city redevelopment projects could be avoided and rebuilding could start immediately on a piecemeal basis.

Residential special zoning districts in the downtown are subject to the following (see diagram):

1. The district must comprise a minimum of one block. (This does not mean that the whole district has to be developed at the same time.)



2. The total amount of open space must equal the open space required in the traditional R2 and R3 zone. (The idea of the zero setback zone is to use open space more efficiently: more useable courtyards and backyards rather than useless sideyards and setbacks.)

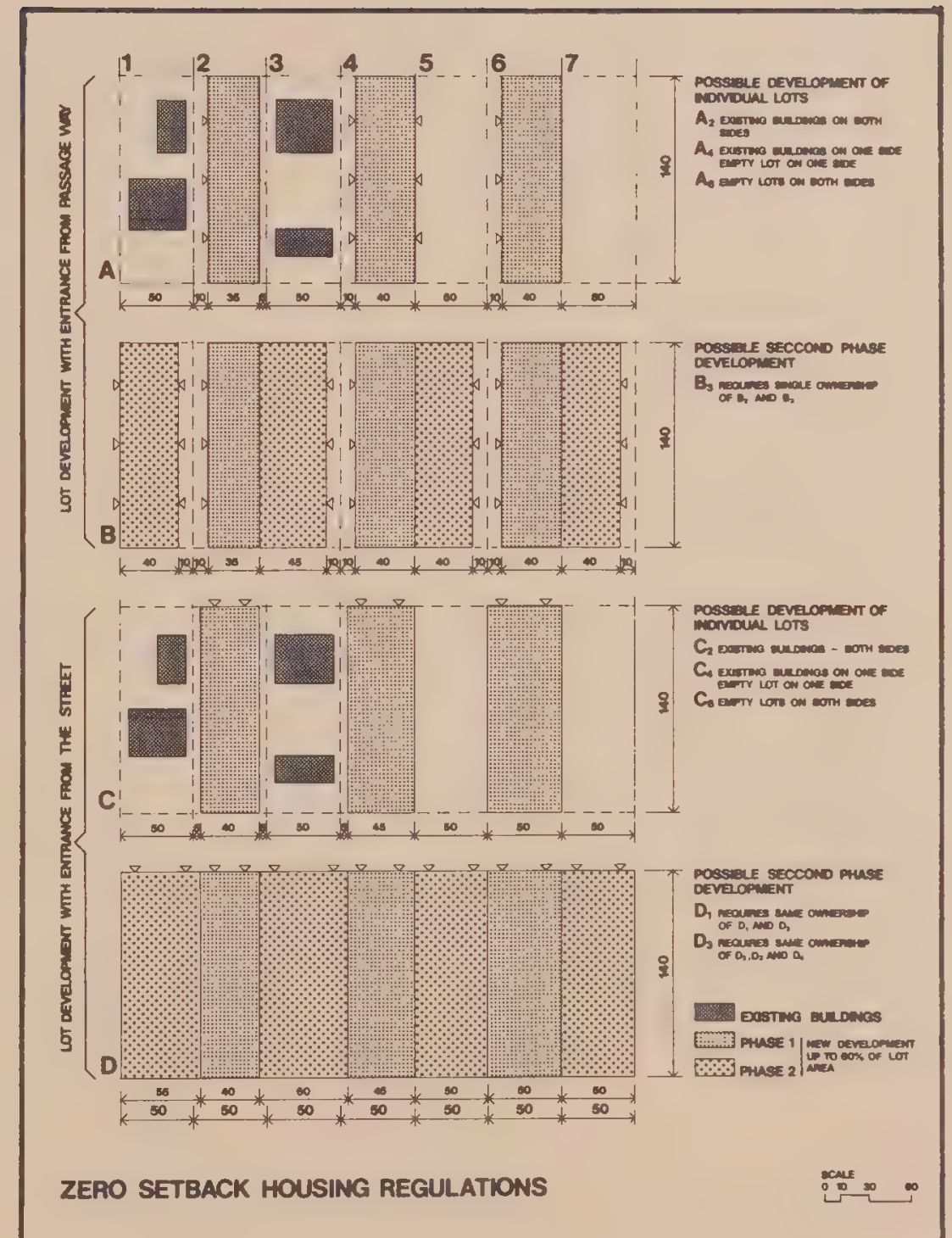
3. If pedestrian access paths to the dwelling units are placed perpendicular to the street, this path should be a minimum of 10 feet per 50-60' lot. Such paths should not have deadends, but connect street to alley. Access paths would be placed adjacent to each other wherever possible, resulting in a 20' access strip.

If access paths for two lots are adjacent to each other, a 4' strip of the path may be added to private courtyards or privately landscaped; no building, however, should extend into this strip.

4. No windows necessary to light a room should be placed on the zero sideyard side. If the windows are placed there, they should be located not less than 6' above the floor of the rooms. (No "right-of-view" can be derived from a window placed on the zero sideyard line.)

5. Building roofs should be designed to drain onto the lot upon which the building is located.

6. During the time of transition from the traditional R2, R3 zones to a zero sideyard and setback zone, the rights of existing buildings should be protected by a sideyard of 5'. This sideyard can be reduced if the total distance to the existing building exceeds 12'.



B. BUILDING SYSTEM

These special zoning conditions were tested by applying a Building System that has been developed by T.E.S.T. (Team for Experimental Systems Techniques) under the direction of Helmut Schulitz.

The T.E.S.T. Housing System is an open-system building method which makes maximum use of pre-finished industrial components from manufacturers' catalogues. The building method is intended to be used for low-rise, high-density housing projects. It does the following:

- cuts down on onsite labor
- enables the owners to choose among different options of catalogue building elements in order to create personal living spaces according to their own imagination
- allows the building to change over time as requirements or tastes change.

The building method consists of a catalogue of compatible components and a set of rules governing their coordination. These rules are based on modular coordination principles and are an extension of the research work of the SAR group in Holland.

Future housing development under this approach would occur at the same densities permitted today in the R3 zoning areas.

The proposed building system uses:

1. Building forms that are climatically more suitable to the El Centro desert condition than the typical R3 developments already built in the area. Buildings are constructed around courtyards which allow private outdoor spaces, provide pockets of cooler air, and allow for easy shading devices. Similar building forms have been developed and tested in hot

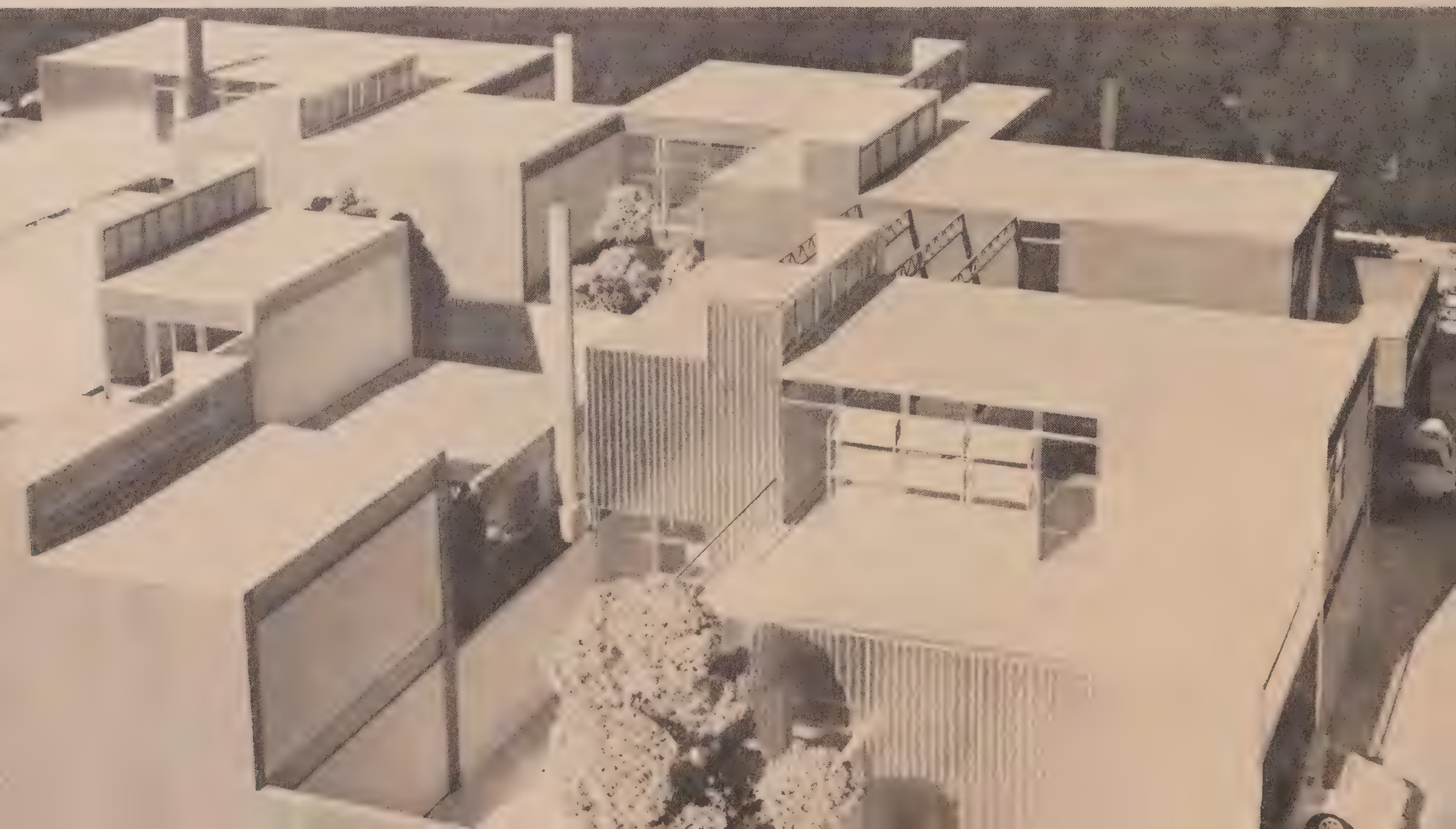
desert climates for thousands of years, although choice of materials and exterior appearance were quite different.

2. Building forms that are at a scale similar to the single family units that exist in the area today. This allows the residents to identify with their house as a distinct unit.
3. Building forms that can be used in the development of large assembled lots as well as individual lots and backyards.
4. The building system is particularly well suited to involving future residents in the decision-making process. It is possible to choose among six different types of units, each with several sub-variations in terms of size and room number. A total of 30 variations or alternative plans are currently documented. Theoretically, the system makes an unlimited number of variations possible. We are currently in the process of developing a computer program in conjunction with the School of Architecture and Urban Planning at UCLA, which will be able to instantly generate and evaluate floorplans for the system, and to respond to individual needs.
5. Since the system offers a large number of alternative prefabricated components, the residents are given a maximum choice for self-expression and comfort. Although all buildings reflect the most rational and systematic construction process, each dwelling unit could be different in form and materials from the one next door.
6. The townhouses could be built and rented or sold as completely furnished buildings, or they could be erected as a basic shell only, at very modest costs, to be finished and modified later by the residents as self-help with untrained labor.



The System Building study is far too extensive to be included in this report. In order to convey the concept and theme for the housing development, photographs of a model which was developed for a typical El Centro site of 140' depth are included. The model depicts only two possible floorplan types out of the 30 mentioned above.

The application of the housing system at a larger scale is shown in the axonometric drawing on page 48



8 IMPLEMENTATION

It is important to emphasize that the total plan, as indicated herein, may not be financed immediately. New sources of funding may become available and new concerns for the future of our urban areas will be expressed -- all indicating that the plan must be ready for action when the will to accomplish its objectives is supported by necessary funds.

There is no doubt that the proposed plan is a bold one. We are suggesting major improvements and the expenditure of considerable money by both the City and private sector. However, the plan could do much to aid the downtown area to regain and retain its important role in the commercial life, and provide exceptional service to the people of El Centro and their neighbors.

A. THE CRITICAL FEATURES

It is important to see the accomplishment of the plan in a time frame of several years. Thus, it is important to identify the elements that can be accomplished in the shortest time and within the funds currently available.

With the concept that it will be possible, in time, to accomplish the entire program, it is essential to phase the activities that will make the most immediate and long-lasting gains.

Of critical importance for the downtown area is the creation of the business loop, along with the necessary signs, advertising and landscaping. This proposal will require no land acquisition or major construction expenditures by the E.T.V. However, this accomplishment will involve negotiations with Caltrans and will take time.

The other equally important element is the redirection of traffic from Main Street to State and

Broadway. This will have to include all necessary curb, gutter and sidewalk improvements.

The problem with this element of the proposal is that it has to be done basically in one sweep over the four block area. Redirection of the traffic over less than a four block length would make little sense. However, the rest of the project could proceed on a block by block basis, always keeping the total scope of the project in mind.

B. LAND CONSOLIDATION

Most of the suggestions made within this report require few, if any, immediate acquisitions of land. However, there will be a need for certain public investments to develop the parking areas and other facilities envisioned along Broadway and State Street.

C. FINANCING POSSIBILITIES

The implementation of many of the suggestions made in this plan requires consideration of various financing possibilities. Because the plan covers a broad range of actions which affect the entire city, it seems appropriate that the financing of these actions be borne over a period of time by various funding sources. The funding may come from the known current resources of the redevelopment and parking funds or from other, future sources such as state, local and possibly federal funds.

In this section we explore how the different suggestions included in this plan might be funded. The city will have to explore and aggressively seek financing from a variety of sources so that complete implementation is possible despite present limited capital funds.

A TEAM APPROACH

From the inception of the project as an essential part of the strengthening of the structure of El Centro, the financing of the work was considered to be a partnership between the property owners and business people whose activities centered around Main Street and the municipality. The division of responsibilities delegated financial obligations to the business community for those expenditures involved in the improvement of the buildings and parking areas. The community obligations involved the overall planning, the use of the redevelopment procedures and authority for acquisition and clearance of blighted or dangerous structures, and the improvement of streets, sidewalks, and other facilities in the public rights of way.

KNOWN FINANCIAL SOURCES

Perhaps the most important local resource for the improvement of the district lies in the hands of the property owners and business people. Only they can improve the appearance of their stores and provide the needed shade for the parking areas. They can also improve their merchandising to take advantage of the centrality of their location. If there is dynamic leadership and unified action based on the plans prepared by the City authorities, the end product will do much to improve their business and the quality of the city as a whole.

The city can assist in the program in many ways and is doing so at present through the preparation of plans for the area as part of the updating of the General Plan. Included as part of this total approach to the city future are the recommendations in this report.

REDEVELOPMENT PROCEDURES

The area between Adams, State, Fourth, and Eighth Streets has been designated by the City Council as a Redevelopment Project within the much larger Redevelopment Area boundaries. It is within this project area that the city believes major improvements can be achieved through the use of the powers of eminent domain and the utilization of funds derived from "tax allocation" procedures provided for in Section 33670 of the State Planning Laws. Under this procedure, the Redevelopment Agency can issue bonds that will be repaid from the additional taxes derived from the improvements within the entire redevelopment area.

The impact of the recently adopted State legislation limiting the taxation on property cannot be evaluated at this time. There will undoubtedly be difficulty in marketing Tax Allocation bonds under the current situation since the increases in property taxes from new development are the resources for retirement of the bonds.

GENERAL CITY TAX FUNDS

Many of the plan's proposals involve actions which fall under the jurisdiction of the city's general government funds. It seems appropriate that in situations where the city has responsibility it should finance needed improvements.

A major project which is within the city's responsibilities is street repaving and curb and sidewalk improvement along Main Street. Both street and sidewalk maintenance have traditionally been a municipal responsibility and should remain so. Therefore, the redevelopment agency should seek municipal funds to improve the surfaces and sidewalks along this important retail business street.

City funds should also be used to landscape the major approach arteries to the central business district. There can be a major adverse impact on business simply because the potential clientele receive negative visual impressions while approaching the business district. Because landscaping streets is partially a city responsibility, the general tax funds might be used to extend the influence of the central business district along its approach arteries.

Still another general tax fund responsibility is to provide city signs. If the city plans to direct traffic into the downtown area by the use of better directional signs, it should provide both attractive and easily visible signs.

The recently passed Proposition 13 will create serious doubts about the utilization of the limited tax income to the city for the types of expenditures envisioned in this method of financing improvements.

FEDERAL ECONOMIC ADMINISTRATION

Funds may be available to assist in creating jobs and economic development. Frequently these funds are utilized to provide the infrastructure or other capital improvements which will result in or inspire economic growth.

There is little doubt that the improvements proposed for the Central Area will create new economic opportunities and growth in the City of El Centro. Since E.D.A. (Economic Development) grants are intended to bring about economic improvements, it may, therefore, be possible that grants could be secured for the portion of the improvements that fall under the city responsibility.

SOUTHWEST BORDER STATES COMMISSION

This agency of the Federal Government may provide funds to improve the economic conditions in the southwest, along the border of the United States and Mexico. Funds from this source might be forthcoming to explore the feasibility of passenger railroad services between El Centro, Calexico and Mexicali.

SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (SBA)

The Federal Government can provide assistance to the already formed Local Development Corporation, composed of local merchants and business interests. Low interest loans are available to small businesses seeking to expand or improve their facilities. By having the LDC, local business can, through their entry fees pool capital to leverage more dollars from the SBA. In addition, the Housing and Urban Development Agency (HUD) can provide "seed" money to assist the LDC in obtaining loans for the improvements.

HEALTH EDUCATION AND WELFARE AND THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

There may be funds to assist the city to develop the cultural complex that is recommended as an integral part of the central core.

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT FUNDS

If, as suggested, the areas north of the business district are devoted to residential development, it may be possible to attract federal funds to help pay the costs of development. The Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 places an emphasis on development of housing for lower and middle income persons. If the residences envisioned were devoted to senior citizens or other low or middle income

tenants it may be possible to receive federal aid in constructing and maintaining the multi-purpose structures.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR - OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

This agency may provide funds or technical assistance in behalf of the creation of a regional museum and the protection of areas of particular historical significance.

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR - COMPREHENSIVE EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ACT (CETA)

Funding is provided for special projects. Municipalities and nonprofit organizations such as LDC are eligible. Such funds could be used to make improvements such as landscaping which would be property of the LDC or funds could be used to perform general cleanup work in the area. Possibilities are being explored.

GASOLINE TAX FUNDS

We have been advised that if the city were to permit diagonal parking on Main Street, under current regulations, gasoline taxes could not be used for the improvement and maintenance of the street. With the proposed detouring of the main streams of through traffic to Commercial and State Streets, it may be assumed that the costs of signing and other traffic controls could be financed by gasoline taxes. Other than in the four block "critical area" the gasoline taxes could still be utilized. Since both Fourth Street and Imperial Highway are part of the "Business Loop" it can be assumed that they are eligible for Gas Tax assistance.

IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

Another possible source of revenues is the establishment of an Improvement District. This special district could then impose special local area taxes which would be used to pay for area improvements. These funds would be used to supplement the re-development and parking funds or the taxes would be imposed to pay for specific improvements which are not being funded by other sources.

SPECIAL PARKING DISTRICT

Special parking districts, in addition to those that now exist, may be created by the joint actions of the business community and the City. The bonds for the improvements would have to be repaid by the participants in the district, on a long term basis.

PRIVATE SECTOR

The success of downtown redevelopment depends upon actions by both the public and private sector. Not only can the private sector promote redevelopment through improved business practices but also by improving and renovating their buildings and signs. These are private improvements which are not and cannot be the responsibility of a public agency. While the redevelopment agency cannot make the improvements in the buildings within the area, it can set guidelines and promote various actions in the downtown area. If the area's businesses wish to revitalize retail activity they cannot and must not depend solely upon public actions. It must be emphasized to these businesses that improvement and maintenance is in their own best interests. The city can and should promote as much private action as possible without any public expenditures.

PHILANTHROPIC DONATIONS

A final source of funds might be philanthropic donations from concerned local individuals or firms. These gifts would most likely have to be tied to particular projects which could benefit the entire community. Such donations have helped El Centro in the past and may be available again in the future.

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